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The Characteristics of Learners Enrolled in Advanced Level Courses in Hebrew, Chinese, and Japanese at Brandeis University.

A DISSERTATION

submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Miguel and my children Ohad and Yonatan who supported me through this journey. Special thanks to my advisor and my mentor Prof. Debbie Sherman and to my committee members Dr. Petner, J. and Dr. Jackson, C.

Abstract

Researchers, practitioners, and policy makers in the field of foreign language study in higher education in the United States are familiar with the phenomenon of declining numbers among learners in advanced foreign language courses. The studies that have examined this phenomenon such as Graman (1987) and Dupuy (1994) investigated the learners of so-called "easy" and commonly taught languages, such as French, German and Spanish and suggest that the learners' positive learning backgrounds outside the formal language program are the main factors that influence the learners' decision to continue their language study in the advanced level courses.

This study offers new direction in understanding the dropout phenomenon. Its goal is to examine the characteristics of learners at the advanced level as a means to explain and understand their motivation to pursue advanced language with the hope that these findings will illuminate the attrition phenomenon in advanced language study. Unlike previous studies, this present work concentrates on learners who have enrolled in advanced foreign language courses in "difficult" languages such as Hebrew, Chinese, and Japanese.

This study thoroughly examines three aspects of these learners:

- Their psychological aspects;
- Their beliefs and values; and,
- Their past and present environments.

In terms of the psychological aspects, the study suggests that the learners of advanced foreign languages have developmental growth and cognition at a very high level. In addition, their personalities are constructed both from independent elements in the areas of motivation and cognition, and from interdependent components in the area of emotion.

This study also indicates that these learners' core values include a belief that effort is a positive virtue, since it brings results and advances them to their desired goals. They also tend to appreciate learning and teaching, human connections, and foreign languages in general. The learners view these values as the main source for helping them to fulfill their different personal needs. In addition, the learners are characterized by their ability to be self- aware regarding their academic and foreign language abilities.

The study also indicates that throughout their lives learners enjoyed a very supportive environment that in many cases exposed them to other cultures and languages. Finally, the study concludes that this group of learners of less commonly taught foreign languages find language learning at the advanced level a framework which they can utilize to satisfy their personal identity and affiliation needs. The author recommends that language programs offer **all** language learners the option to use their language courses as a framework for addressing the above personal needs. A variety of courses that enable **all** learners to view language learning as a source of personal growth and enrichment may be designed and useful as a means of addressing the dropout phenomenon.

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Chapter 1

1. The Research Question

The purpose of this research is to examine a group of foreign language learners who are enrolled in advanced less commonly taught language courses in an American institution of higher education.

My desire to understand this group of students originated from the fact that of all learners who study foreign language in an American higher education framework, only 45%-55% continue in advanced courses.

This phenomenon starts at the secondary school level with only 20% of foreign language learners continuing to the advanced level. A study conducted by Draper (1991) indicates that enrollment in foreign language instruction in general continues to increase at a steady pace; in 1990 more than five million students in American public secondary schools were enrolled in foreign language courses in grades 7-12. The total number of students studying a foreign language had increased by 500,000 between 1985-1990, resulting in a 4.5% increase in the percentage of students enrolled in foreign language study over the five-year period. Looking only at the high school level (grades 9-12), 4.25 million students, 38.4% of the total school population, were studying a foreign language in 1990, an increase of 6.1% over 1985. This is clearly a significant number since the total number of students was actually decreasing during this period, from enrollments of 12,466,506 to enrollments of 11,099,648.

According to Draper's study, "While the increase in foreign language study is heartening, not all the news is good," since "few students continue to study the amount of

time needed to gain working knowledge of a language" (Draper, 1991, p.3). Fewer than 20% of language students go beyond the second level of study, and only about 6% of all students leave high school having studied more than two years of a foreign language.

In higher education, we find a similar scenario. Based on Huber's survey (1992), Dupuy (1994) concluded that the dropout phenomenon after the intermediate level also exists in language programs in higher education. Huber's study does not specify all languages, but it is valuable as the latest study that examines the dropout phenomenon. In general, we can learn from it that there is a 45-55% dropout rate between second year courses (intermediate level) and advanced courses in languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Germanic languages, Slavic languages, and classical languages. According to this survey, in Near Eastern languages, the dropout rate is slightly lower, 38%. What is interesting to note in this research is that languages such as Japanese and Chinese had the lowest percentage of dropout between intermediate and advanced levels, only 12 %. However, Dupuy makes the point that Huber indicates that in these languages the dropout rate between first and second year learners is the highest, around 45-55%. Dupuy believes that the higher retention percentage between intermediate and advanced learners of Japanese and Chinese is due to the fact that many learners of those languages are native speakers who join these language courses at the advanced level. (Dupuy,1994, pp.2-3)

From my experience as the director of Hebrew and Oriental Languages Program at Brandeis University, I found that only 50—55% of the students who completed second- year courses in our Hebrew language program continue their foreign language education at the advanced level courses. And in Japanese and Chinese the rate is similar.

As we can see, the percentage of dropout is not the same in all frameworks, but at the same time it is clear that as a result of the dropout phenomenon most students who graduate from secondary schools or colleges are not competent in the language they studied.

The rationale for investigating this dropout phenomenon is the fact that learners who reach the intermediate level achieve only basic survival proficiency. In the ACTFL (American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages) guidelines this level is described as follows:

> Able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated, basic communicative tasks and social situations. Can talk simply about self and family members. Can ask and answer questions and participate in simple conversations on topics beyond the most immediate needs: e.g., personal history and leisure time activities. Utterance length increases slightly, but speech may continue to be characterized by frequent long pauses, since the smooth incorporation of even basic conversational strategies is often hindered as the speaker struggles to create appropriate language forms. Pronunciation may continue to be strongly influenced by first language and fluency may still be strained. Although misunderstanding still arise the intermediate mid speaker can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors (ACTFL,1990, p.7)

Although termed "intermediate level," the level described here is in effect one at which the learner functions only at a basic level. This kind of communication is very limited and does not allow the learner to communicate significantly with a native speaker in the target language.

A study conducted by the Defense Language Institute (Omaggio, 1993, pp. 27-28) concludes that the number of study hours required to function at only the intermediate-mid level differs from one language to another. This study (Omaggio,1993, pp. 29-30) shows how adults with high levels of aptitude reached different levels of proficiency in different languages. For example, it took them longer to be able to function

at the intermediate level in German than in French and Spanish, and even a longer time was required to attain the same level of proficiency in Hebrew or Arabic. These findings are clear that there are groups of languages that are "easier" for Americans--generally those related to English, such as Spanish and French, while languages such as Chinese and Japanese are "difficult" for Americans to learn. According to the above research, learners of language that are considered "easy" to learn need "240 hours of intensive" instruction (Omaggio, 1993, p. 23) in order to achieve a "survival competency." Although many foreign language learners may receive the amount of exposure to the language in their required two years of foreign language study to be able to function minimally, they do not get this exposure intensively (Draper, 1991, p.3) and therefore, they may leave the language program without having even survival competency in the target language. It is clear that in order to be at a significantly competent level, the learner should study beyond the minimal two-year requirements and reach the next level, the advanced level, which is defined as being able

> to initiate, sustain, and bring to closure a wide variety of communicative tasks, including those that require an increased ability to convey meaning with diverse language strategies due to a complication or unforeseen turn of events.....able to satisfy requirements of school and work situations, and narrate and describe with paragraph length connected discourse. The advanced...can be understood without difficulty by native interlocutors (ACTFL,1990, p.9).

Although the definition above focuses on advanced oral skills, such learners usually possess similar abilities in the other language skills (writing, listening, and reading) as described in the ACTFL guidelines. It is important to note that the learners at the advanced level are not even close to a native speakers' linguistic abilities, but, at the

same time, these learners can communicate easily with native speakers, which the intermediate level learner cannot do. As a foreign language teacher, and as administrator of a language program in higher education, I wondered why most students of foreign language choose not to continue their study of the language beyond what it is minimally required of them. Although most academic institutions, both at secondary and post-secondary levels, offer higher level courses to those who wish to continue their foreign language education, to reach the advanced level abilities that will allow them to use the target language proficiently, only a small percentage of the students take advantage of this opportunity.

In addition, as a practitioner in the field of language learning and teaching, I realize that studying a foreign language in a classroom setting is a major challenge. A learner who can manage successfully to study two years of foreign language in a high school or 3-4 semesters at the post-secondary level has invested much effort and time in the process. Unfortunately, dropping out of the process will often result in their forgetting the language. I wondered what makes students decide to "throw away" such an investment when they have the chance to become more proficient foreign language users.

I also wondered why this phenomenon still exists in a period when many professionals and political leaders advocate for the need to function in many NEL (Non English Languages). The need to communicate with the rest of the world in a variety of languages is related to recent economic developments and the United States participation in the global market. _____Maxwell, the Director of the National Foreign Language Center, and his colleagues, Brecht and Walton, (1994), issued letters to foreign language educators, as well as to policy makers, explaining the urgent need to include

NELs in the curriculum of every educational institution. They argue that since the American market today has shifted mainly to supplying products and services (e.g., health, banking), there is a need to communicate on a daily basis with ordinary people around the world who do not necessarily have command of English. They also claim that, although the Cold War is over and the threat from the Soviet Union no longer exists, Americans cannot isolate themselves from the world. There are other national security issues, such as the threat of nuclear war and the spread of terrorism, as well as humanitarian issues such as natural disasters, or the welfare of oppressed people around the world, that create the need for American citizens who deal with these issues to use NEL. They also claim that internal domestic issues involving the diverse cultures of the United States create the need for broad-based, cross-cultural communication. According to them, understanding and appreciating these other cultures requires knowledge of NELs.

Whether we agree with all of the above arguments or not, it is clear to me that, given global and internal trends in the next century, many Americans will face the need for NEL proficiency. In other words, knowing a foreign language will become a matter not only of personal interest, but also of national interest. Such a notion makes me wonder again why many Americans who invest in becoming professionals do not realize that their competence will be enhanced by proficiency in at least one NEL.

In the introduction to her research, Dupuy (1994) provides four possible explanations regarding the dropout phenomenon. In her opinion, a major reason is the fact that most higher education institutions do not encourage learners of foreign languages to achieve higher levels. By requiring only two years of foreign language

study, as well as by accepting the minimum grade [D] as a passing grade, such institutions convey the message that multilingualism is not important and therefore, foreign language study is not crucial. Second, Dupuy also believes that there is a gap between learners' objectives and the goals of the academy in regard to foreign language study. While learners explore the possibilities of integrating the language into their future careers or for their travel plans, universities emphasize more academic aspects such as linguistics and literature. Third, in many cases, advanced language courses are also taught in traditional ways that may not appeal to learners, such as memorization and grammar drills. Finally, Dupuy claims that the advanced foreign language courses in general demand higher abilities in the language than students coming from the intermediate level are prepared for, causing many learners to distance themselves from the advanced level (Dupuy, 1994, pp. 3-5).

I agree with Dupuy's claim that learning environment is crucial for learning languages, both in terms of expectations and preparation. Therefore, I decided, as the first step in investigating this phenomenon, to reexamine the learner's learning framework. While Dupuy refers only to the learning environment that occurs in the current foreign language programs in higher education in the United States, I decided to expand this research into a broader examination. Since the language programs in American universities are part of American education in general and language education in particular, I decided to investigate these two frameworks in a historical perspective to see whether their development has influenced the current state of foreign language learning. In other words, since I assumed that most of the learners who study foreign languages at the university level are a product of the American educational system and therefore

influenced by it, I searched for any possible historical reason that might explain the dropout phenomenon. From my survey of both frameworks, I found that the development of the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the United States reflects the development of American education in general.

An overview of the American educational system clearly indicates that the main characteristic of this system is that it is viewed by many groups as a tool to either create or maintain social order in American society. By "social order" I mean the ideal structure of society from the points of view of those in power. Therefore it can be said that the educational system is a utilitarian system that is used by different groups with special interests such as communities, politicians, religious groups, and so on. Since many groups in different periods of American history have viewed social order differently, the educational system became a diverse system that is constantly changing. There are many examples that illustrate this idea of social order. In the Colonial period in which, for example, according to Parkinson (1968) the social order of the Puritans was shaped by their religious beliefs, it was believed that the main knowledge that a child needed to possess was that which not only enhanced his or her religious identity, but also developed thinking skills, including linguistic skills, believed to improve mental discipline. Such skills could enhance citizens' spiritual health, making the society stronger. Perkinson's claim is that the ideal order of the settlers was influenced by the order they knew from the old country. For example, mercantile-interested middle classes advocated the idea that each child needed to possess skills that would allow him to develop a profession that would help to strengthen the economy (Parkinson, 1968, pp. 5-12). Higher social classes,

such as the white elite in the South, saw themselves as the economic and political leaders and educated their sons with the necessary skills to sustain their dominance.

The study of languages was not an exception; it was also seen throughout the history of American education as a utilitarian tool to achieve social and economic goals. In this context, the English language captured a central and important role. According to Church (1976) and Tayck (1967), Noah Webster, the author of the first American dictionary, believed that there was a need to strengthen the social order by teaching patriotism and nationalism through learning about "American geography, American history, and the American Language" (Tayck,1967, p.86). Church claims that Webster believed that

> Americans should make their language as different as possible from that of Englishmen, without of course surrendering the use of English altogether. Americans must develop their own standards of correct and incorrect usage and pronunciation so they would no longer need to rely on English criteria. (Church, 1976, p.18)

The idea of using the language as a tool to create equality among the people was the opposite approach from the European way where the language was used to differentiate people by class. In order to bring the people together, Webster wrote a dictionary in which he specified how American English should be spelled and pronounced. The "Spelling Bee" was the tool that was used to promote American English. In these competitions, individuals or teams were needed to spell the words according to the Webster dictionary. Church explains

> Americans believed that their nation was morally and politically superior because it was free of class differences... If all Americans could read, write, speak and

> spell the same way it would demonstrate beyond doubt how equal ...they were. (Church,1976, p.17) .

According to Pentlin (1984) the Founding Fathers also recognized the importance of English as part of the necessary education of American children who, from the beginning, came from different linguistic backgrounds. Pentlin believes that unlike Webster who argued that for the sake of nationalism all Americans should acquire a specifically American English to create a new national identity, the founders feared that the distance from Britain would create distance from proper English and what it represented: "The English language could become vulgarized and Americans would appear to be ignorant" (Pentlin, 1984, p. 5). At the same time, for political and economics reasons the Founding Fathers themselves appreciated foreign languages and even studied them. For example, Franklin knew Italian and Spanish, and Jefferson had French, Latin, Greek, and Spanish authors in his library. John Adams studied French and John Quincy Adams, German. They recognized foreign languages as critical to specific professions. Franklin suggested Greek and Latin for studies in divinity school, and French for those who studied physics. As we can see, in the first phase of the American educational system, languages were used as a practical tool and were recognized as the tool of a utilitarian educational system.

During the early period of the American educational system while the native tongue was most emphasized, elite gentleman had the privilege of studying classical languages both in private schools and universities. According to Church (1976, p. 48), behind this language learning also lay a practical reason. They believed that the study of classical languages would help develop the learners' minds by teaching them mental

discipline (Olivia,1969, p. 2). Church summarizes the role of language study at this period by saying: "Thus, while elementary schools... sought to break down class barriers by stressing common training in English, institutions of higher education continued to erect other linguistic separation (Church, 1976, p. 48)."

It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that modern languages gained an important place in the university curricula. According to Liedke (1994), both the secularization of the universities and the beginning of ties with European universities influenced this change, with the strengthening of the Modern Language Association established in 1883. According to Liedke (1994), many scholars believed that modern language could help convey modern ideas (Liedke,1994, p. 19). Interestingly, MacLaughlin (1985) mentions the fact that in areas in which immigrants settled during this period, they continued teaching their children their heritage languages, even in public school. The teaching of language in the early period clearly demonstrates how languages were viewed as a tool to achieve practical goals, whether to develop thinking skills, to communicate with immigrants in businesses or political parties, or to strengthen patriotic feelings.

The utilitarian approach seems to guide the development of the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the United States in subsequent historical periods as well. National priorities and political interests continued to influence the educational system in general and the teaching of foreign languages in particular. For example, two national committees, one in 1892 and the other in 1899, were appointed to review high school education in the United States, and included members of the National Education Association (Church, 1976, pp. 295 and Brown, 1994, pp. 3). Their goal was to examine

national education with the purpose of improving the national goals. Among their recommendations was the expansion of the study of various foreign languages in more high schools, so that students would be more prepared for higher education.

The period between the two World Wars also dramatically shaped and influenced the educational systems' approach to foreign languages. Brown (1994) reports that hatred towards foreigners increased and they were forbidden to speak their languages. During WW1 English was officially mandated as the only language of America and Theodore Roosevelt's words, "We have room but for one language here and that is the English language." (Brown, 1994, p. 4) reflected the national feelings at that time. In places such as Columbus, Ohio, where foreign periodicals and foreign language books had been published, they were now eliminated and even burned. In many states, foreign language programs, especially German, were eliminated from public schools. According to MacLaughlin (1985, p. 81) twenty-three states passed hostile laws against the teaching and the using of foreign languages. Again, we can see how languages were perceived as a tool to express and act on behalf of national priorities, especially when it also reflected the social order. According to Church (1976), the concentration on the English language was also part of the national effort to strengthen the nation, especially after the 1929 depression. The fear among conservative groups was that foreigners would bring their progressive ideas to the United States and would affect the national moral and the social order.

The educational system once again was drafted in the effort to protect the nation through its curricula. It was not until the end of WWII that the national agenda again encouraged openness towards teaching and learning foreign languages. During WWII

there was a sudden realization that Americans needed the skills to communicate with foreigners. Many servicemen found themselves around the world without the ability to communicate with local people. As a result, the army developed methods of teaching foreign languages intensively. According to Oliva (1969, p. 67), the new role of the United States in the world as the political and economic leader led to changes in the educational systems, and its attitude towards the teaching and the learning of foreign languages. The idea that the United States needed to influence as well as to compete in the global market created an impressive effort to improve the situation of foreign language teaching. National committees were created in the 1950s to revise and improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages in American education. In the early 1960's parents advocated the teaching of more languages in elementary schools since they realized that their children would need to be part of a global community. According to McLaughlin (1985), "Sputnik" in particular led to the fear that "American education was inferior to that of the Soviet Union" (McLaughlin, 1985, p. 80).

Since the realization of the importance of foreign language learning and teaching in the early Sixties, its place as part of the educational system was firmly established. It seems that practicality, for the learners and their parents, as well as for the nation, influences the state of the teaching and learning of foreign languages. A 1994 survey conducted by the Joint National Committee (1994) shows the commitment of states to foreign language education. It was found that in 40 states there is a requirement in secondary level to have two or more years of foreign language education, and 27 states even include it as part of their core curriculum. Most of the states encourage foreign language learning as part of their understanding that this is a skill that learners will need

in the next millennium in order to survive in their professions and to help the United States retain its role as political and economic leader.

This utilitarian educational agenda might indicate two possible explanations for the dropout phenomenon. If, indeed, practicality is the main motivation to master a language, we can assume that only those who view a certain language as useful for them in their future careers, or those whose patriotic feelings lead them to pursue foreign languages for the sake of the national agenda, tend to continue their study to the advanced level. Conversely those who do not fall into these categories, tend to drop their language study. If this is, indeed, the case, only a small group of all foreign language learners believe that foreign languages will be useful for them, or for advancing the national goals, since the ma?ority of learners do not continue to study at the level that will really allow them to function in a different language. The question then is, is this the case? Or are there other reasons that influence learners' decisions to continue their language study beyond intermediate level courses?

Some explanations regarding the dropout phenomenon emerge in the context of **theories of foreign language acquisition**. Theories of language acquisition often point out the difficulties of the process that might lead learners to dropout. Most of these theories assume that the acquisition of language is an internal process that allows the learners to learn the new language; most researchers choose to focus only on one or few aspects the acquisitions process. Some theories are based on actual studies, and others use disciplines such as psychology or neurology as the basis for their assumptions. Most of the theories do not explain the process in terms of specific levels. They tend to explain the entire process as a whole. However, I found a few theories that point out some

difficulties that might suggest what lies behind learners' decision to drop out of the learning process.

For one example, Ellis describes the complexity of language learning by pointing out the mental processes that occur during the learning stages. And Selinker's 1972 Interlanguage Theory (Omaggio, 1993, p.266) describes language learning as an "intermediate system located somewhere in between the learner's native language and the target language" (Ommagio 1993, p. 229). Researchers such as Corder, Selinker and Ellis agree that in this continuum learners use their native language knowledge in order to acquire the target language. However, this transfer of knowledge is not a linear process. As a result many times we can find advanced learners who make errors in their target language production. Ellis (1994, pp. 330-331) claims that this interference of learner's native language errors are typical of the learners at all levels. However, sometimes at an advanced level learners can produce errors that appear in the initial stages of the learning. The learners' tendency is to draw always on what seems to them similar to their native tongue, and is typical to all stages of learning. Ellis (1994) states that Kellerman's 1985 theory (Ellis,1994, p. 303), the "transfer theory", can explain the "backslide phenomenon" that learners tend to go through after their initial study of the language. At the beginning, if there are similarities between the native language and the target language, the learners produce the new language correctly, while in the second stage at the more advanced level, when the similarities disappear, it takes the learners some time to realize this and they make errors which reduce the quality of their language production. It is not until the next stage, according to this theory, that learners understand the new structure of the new language and start to use it correctly again. This

phenomenon is called the "U shape behavior" (Ellis, 1994, p. 303) and, in my opinion, can also serve as an explanation for the dropout phenomenon, since learners who initiate their study with great facility suddenly find themselves performing at lower level, experience disappointment and abandon the process.

In opposite cases, learners who understand well the differences between their own language and the target language try to avoid using formats that are not familiar to them, and therefore tend not to advance in their language production, which may also cause disappointment and may result in abandonment of the learning process.

This might also explain the fact that learners whose native tongue is close to the target language will have fewer difficulties in learning the new language and will produce fewer errors versus than those whose native tongue is far from it. The difficulty of a language is defined by the level and amount of effort learners need to invest in their learning. In the context of the learners' dropout phenomenon, it is predictable that learners of languages that are remote from their native language would be the most likely to terminate the learning process.

Another group of language acquisition theories describes the **external factors** that can influence and interfere with the internal process of language acquisition. Factors such as **age** (e.g. Penfield and Roberts 1959, Lennebeg 1967, Olsen and Samuels 1973, Krahen 1973, Burstall 1975, Oyama 1976, Neufeld 1978, Seliger 1978, Snow and Hoefnagle-Hohle 1978, Flege 1987,Scovel 1988, Pawtowski 1990, Larsen- Freeman and Long 1991, Birdsong 1992)**, ethnic identity** (e.g. Lambert 1974, Giles and Johnson 1981,Giles and Ryan 1982, Gardner 1985, Svanes 1988, Gudykunst & Ting-toomy 1990), **gender**

(e.g., Carroll 1969, Burstall 1975, Eisentein 1982, Maltz and Broker 1982, Spolsky 1989, Ludwig 1983, Gass and Varonis 1986, Boyle 1987, Nyikos 1990, Labov 1991, Pica 1991, Bacon and Finnemann 1992), **and social class** (e.g., Burstill 1975, Heat 1983, Preston 1989, Olshtain, Shohamy, Kemp, and Chatow 1990, Lambert 1991). Although not inclusive, the findings regarding each of the above factors may be used as an argument to explain difficulties in the learning process. For example, the general notion is that younger learners acquire foreign language better, which may suggests that college learners may struggle more through the learning process (Ellis, 1994, pp. 201-202). If it is indeed true, as most studies show, that females and middle class learners do better than working class learners and males in a classroom setting in acquiring foreign language (Ellis, 1994, pp. 202 -206) this suggests that most working class learners and males are candidates for dropping out of the language learning process. In addition, the notion that those with close ethnic identity and with positive attitudes towards the target language (Ellis,1994, pp. 207-211) are more successful in their learning, suggest that the lack of these conditions will result in learning difficulties that may end in leaving the process.

Other external factors that either hinder or facilitate foreign language learning are the contexts of learning, such as natural learning environments versus classroom settings, or learners' preference for language study and the amount and quality of input that learners receive during the course of their study. Krashen (Ellis, 1994, p. 364) believes that significant input and interaction increase the learners' ability to produce better outcomes. If, indeed, the learners do not receive such input, the learning process may be interrupted and may break down.

The above theories may suggest some reasons to explain why foreign language learners give up on their efforts to continue at the advanced level. They give us the opportunity to speculate why learners may leave the learning process. However, my main concern regarding this approach is that most of the researchers who created these theories examined mainly the quality of learners' linguistic production. In other words, they pointed out the possibilities for learners' difficulties by looking at the language production and not at learners. In my opinion, such studies can not explain learners' behavior. To assume that their language production can be a cause for their dropout seems wrong, unless the learners themselves testify to that.

The possible explanations cited above made it clear to me that, although several of areas might supply explanations regarding the dropout phenomenon, none is more than speculation. Therefore, my conclusion is that an important way to establish a firm explanation is to engage the learners in the search for answers. Asking the learners to comment on the above areas could serve as a method for gathering the necessary information.

Since my goal is to understand the dropout phenomenon between the intermediate and the advanced level, I started by examining intermediate level students with the hope of understanding them as learners and finding leads that might shed light on the phenomenon. In research I conducted among intermediate learners of Hebrew at Brandeis University (Ringvald 1994), I found my interviewees to be motivated learners as well as learners who have a clear sense of their linguistic abilities and who feel comfortable in their learning situations. Unfortunately, this study did not give me any indication of how to relate the intermediate level learners' characteristics to the issue of the dropout

phenomenon. Therefore, I have decided that I will search for insight among those that did not drop out from the language program but continued their study at the advanced level. My hope is that by identifying the reasons that motivated students to continue their language educational at the advanced level, I will be able to understand better the dropout phenomenon.

In other words, my research question is not why students tend to drop out before reaching the advanced level, but why students tend to continue at the advanced level. Understanding foreign language learners enrolled at the advanced level became more crucial for me when I realized that identifying the characteristics and motivation of these learners may allow many practitioners in the field to modify language programs to accommodate their needs and to identify learners who possess these characteristics at early stages of the learning process and to help them use it in order to become advanced learners in the language programs. My research will concentrate on learners of Hebrew, Japanese, and Chinese in advanced language courses at Brandeis University.

My research question is:

What can we learn from in-depth interviews with learners enrolled in advanced courses in Hebrew, Chinese, and Japanese at Brandeis University, regarding their characteristics, personal contexts, and motivation, that can help us develop and create new learning environments at all levels which will encourage students to become more personally involved in their language learning and, perhaps, more likely to continue their studies.

Chapter 2

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Foreign Language Learner. What does the research suggest?

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review research related to learners of foreign languages. This is a complicated subject since learning a foreign language can be accomplished outside the classroom as well as in an academic setting. Interest in the learning process has produced a large and varied body of research that is engaged with the question of how to predict the conditions that influence success in the process of learning a new language. There are several ways in which the research in the field tries to examine this question.

Many researchers study the nature of languages that are taught; others look at the methods of teaching. Some focus on the learners themselves, particularly, on their linguistic production. For example, there are studies that identify and analyze errors in the learner's production of language. There are others that examine the developmental stages, patterns, and sequence of the learned language by examining the discourse of the learner. Many studies try to identify pragmatic aspects, by observing the ways in which the learner uses the target language.

Other researchers concentrate on understanding the behavioral aspects of the learners, and how these influence the learners in acquiring the new language. This area is very broad and includes learners' motivation to learn the language, learners' emotional state when they are in the process of learning, their perception of the language, their personality, their learning styles, and so on.

While, in the first group, linguistics is the main domain of the research, the second group incorporates many disciplines such as psychology, sociology, neurology, and education. In this category, the learners are active participants in the research since the findings are dependent on their responses. The instruments used are mainly self-reports, interviews, questionnaires, and observations. This category is also characterized by the fact that it is largely found on either one aspect of the learners that is being examined or a group of aspects that can be related, such as personality and learning styles.

My own goal is to construct a profile of foreign language learners who continue their study to the advanced level, therefore, I intend to examine these learners from all possible aspects. This research will require the learners actively to participate by responding to my questions through interviews and questionnaires. Therefore, I view my study as belonging to the second group of research on language learners. I have decided to concentrate this review on the research which examines learners rather than their production. Since the body of research is large and varied, I have used mainly resources that summarize the research, as well as selected materials that report in detail on different studies, especially those that I have found crucial to an in depth understanding.

2.1.1 Motivation

a. Introduction

Many researchers in the field of foreign language acquisition believe that "motivation determines the extent of active, personal involvement in L2 learning"(Oxford & Shearin, 1994, p.12) and thus the achievement of proficiency in the

foreign language. Therefore they assume that understanding learners' degree of motivation to acquire a new language is key to understanding learners' ability to succeed in the learning process. The centrality of the role of motivation has created, according to Dornyei (1994a), "a considerable amount of research that investigates the nature and the role of motivation in the L2 learning process" (Dornyei, 1994a, p. 273). The goal of this review is to describe the main trends of that research. Since it will be impossible to relate all research in this area, I choose to demonstrate only studies that clearly represent, in my opinion, the key aspects of motivation.

b. The Socio-Educational Model.

Much of the work in this area relies on the model created by Gardner et al (1972) and the tests that they created and in many cases administered. Researchers and practitioners in the field of foreign language acquisition agree that Gardner et al. (1972) created the principal framework for investigating the relationship between motivation and learning foreign languages. In order to understand Gardner and Lambert's (1959) views regarding the issue of motivation, there is a need to clarify their perceptions regarding acquisition of foreign language in general. They perceive the acquisition of foreign language as a psychosocial phenomenon rather than an educational one, even if the language is learned in a classroom setting. In their view, learning a new language means not only acquiring new knowledge about language elements, but also acquiring "symbolic elements of a different ethnolinguistic community" (Au,1988, p. 38). In other words, they assume that in learning a new language learners demonstrate their social needs to either identify or to be connected with a new community. This theory is known

as "The Socio-Educational Model." This desire by the learners to integrate culturally and linguistically, termed the "integrative motivation," is viewed by Gardner et al. as the most important type of language motivation. At the same time they recognize "instrumental motivation" in which the learners seek to benefit from knowing a new language, for example in the workplace. They also believe that learners' attitudes to the community where the target language is in use, as well as attitudes towards the target language itself, influence their level of motivation.

Although there is agreement regarding the contribution of the Socio-Educational Model to the understanding of learners' motivation, there are different opinions regarding the actual findings resulting from the Gardner investigation. According to Oxford (1996, p. 4), there is no doubt that for Gardner and his colleagues 'integrative motivation' at various levels is the central theme of their work, and time and again it has proven its importance in relation to language achievement" (Oxford, 1996 p. 4). In addition, Oxford agrees with Gardner that 'integratively motivated' students capitalize on all practice opportunities, volunteer more answers in the classroom, are more precise in responses, and are more satisfied and rewarded for participation" (Oxford, 1996, p. 4). On the other hand, Au (1988) claims that there are discrepancies between Gardner's research results and the conclusion at which they arrived. In seven cases, Au found no correlation between integrative motivation and achievement, and in four cases there were actually negative relationships. Au claims that these discrepancies raise many questions about the validity of the Gardner team's research, and as a result the theory which is based on it.

The Gardner team used the direct method in their investigation, which Au (1988) defines as "direct questions or scales" (Au, 1988 p. 78) in which the goal of the research

is apparent to the subjects. The questionnaire they used most frequently to identify and measure the integrative motivation of their learners is the "Attitude and Motivation Test Battery"(AMTB). This questionnaire contains questions regarding the students' desire to integrate, their attitude, and their evaluation of the learning situation, including the teacher and the course. According to Au (1988) this questionnaire is not of "an empirical nature" (Au, 1988, p. 79) since Gardner admitted that they did not use statistical factors to create the questionnaire and its scales but used their own "logic" in classifying the questions. Au mentions the fact that this test was given to as many as "5000 English Canadian pupils, grades 7-11, in seven regions of Canada" (1988, p. 79). It was also given to various groups of learners in the U.S. For example in research conducted in Maine, Connecticut, and Louisiana in 1972. Au also notes that in most cases this test was not used in its entirety. Both the Gardner team and other researchers employed only parts of the tests or modified them as they needed.

Other researchers used other methods to examine the relationship between learners' motivation and foreign language achievements by the "indirect method, where in the research its true aim is not apparent to the subjects" (Au, p. 79). For example, the Spolsky Identity Scale (Spolsky, 1969) asked subjects to use a given list of adjectives to describe the following: themselves, their ideal selves, their native language peers, and native speakers of L2. Au sees these studies more as evaluating attitude than motivation and therefore concludes, "It is not clear to what extent they bear directly on the specific question of the relationship between the integrative motive and L2" (Au, p. 80). Au reaches the same conclusion regarding the Matched - Guise Technique (Au, 1988, p. 80). This test asks subjects to listen to tapes on which bilingual people read in both their

native language and L2. The listener rates them according to a personality scale, and the score indicates how the subjects view the readers. Again, here, Au claims that this test examines attitude towards language and community and cannot prove the existence of an integrative motivation and its relationship to L2 achievements.

Notwithstanding the reservations and flaws outlined above, from the 1950s until recently, the Gardner study was the main reference point used by researchers examining the relationship between motivation and foreign language acquisition.

c. Expansion of the Socio-Educational Model

In the past twenty years, new approaches have been developed based on the Gardner study. Oxford and Shearin (1994) and many other researchers claim that there is a need for broader explanations of the motivation phenomenon. They argue that the socio-educational theory is limited in its ability to explain a variety of phenomena that relate to motivation.

For example, motivation may change over time, as when a learner who embarked upon the foreign language learning for one reason continues for another reason. A study done by Xiaohong (1997) concluded that the factors motivating Asian-American students who study Chinese at the university level change over time. Typically, they begin to study the language because of their familiarity with the culture, which leads them to believe that the language will be easy for them to learn and that they can thus fulfill the university language requirement and get high grades at the same time. On the other hand, they tend to continue at the intermediate level only if they believe in their ability to cope with the difficulty of the learning process and their willingness to overcome it.

Other researchers criticize the Gardner study for undervaluing the role of instrumental motivation in enhancing learning. Oxford, for example, believes greater importance should be attributed to this element especially in the context of foreign language learning versus second language learning. The setting for learning foreign language is peculiar in its artificiality—i.e., it takes place in a classroom setting without an outside environment that supports, stimulates, or indeed creates the need to integrate in the target language. Ely's research in the U.S (1986b) and Dornyei's (1990) in Hungary show the importance of instrumental motivation whether it be to fulfill specific language requirements or to be able to connect to the global market. Dornyei even makes the point that instrumental motivation is more powerful in the lower levels, while the integrative motivation is more significant beyond the intermediate level as a motive for learning.

From a somewhat different point of view, Schmidt (1996) challenges the Gardner claim that learners can have either integrative or instrumental motivation. Schmidt claims that there are studies that clearly show motivation as a multi-factored phenomenon. For example, Dornyei in Hungary and Julkunen in Finland (Schmidt, 1996, pp. 21-22) both concluded from their studies that motivation to study a foreign language involves multiple reasons, including integrative and instrumental motivation as well as need for achievement, past experience, attitude towards the learning process and the language, and so on.

From another perspective, Schmidt together with Crookes (1991), claim that motivation to learn a foreign language can be explained by two sets of motives: external and internal. Oxford (1996) explains that Crookes and Schmidt view "internal

motivation" as entailing interest in the language and in mastering it for practical reasons such as the ability to function in the language as well as to succeed in the learning environment. The "external factors" are behavioral and include the decisions that the learner makes regarding the learning process, such as the ability to choose both the level and method of engagement with the language.

Schmidt based his theory on research done by others such as Maher and Archer (1987) or Keller (1983), as well as on studies that he conducted. For example, along with Boraie and Kassabgy, Schmidt (Schmidt 1996, pp.13-87)) conducted an empirical study that illustrated and clarified the idea of internal and external motives. The research that was done by Schmidt and his associates took place in Egypt with 1500 adults who were enrolled in a private English language instruction program. The goal of the research was to identify the components of motivation for learning English among this population, as well as to identify their preferences regarding learning strategies and to correlate this with findings regarding the components of motivation. Based on a questionnaire consisting of 100 questions, the findings show positive attitudes towards the language and its culture as the main components of motivation. They also could trace signs of external motivation. The findings also demonstrated, as one would expect, a high correlation between motivation and learners' engagement in the learning process.

Dornyei is another example of a researcher who tries to expand research in foreign language motivation beyond the socio-psychological model. He claims that since Gardner and his associates investigated the motivation phenomenon mainly in second language settings (that is, in an environment where the language is learned or reinforced outside the classroom) there is a need to investigate motivation as it is expressed in the

classroom setting. In research conducted in 1980 in Hungary (Schmidt,1996, pp. 89-101), he found that learners in classroom settings operate on three levels: their language level, their personality, and the level of their learning situation. He claims that at each level there are different motivational factors. For example, at the language level, learners wish to use the target language either for integrative or instrumental reasons. At the personality level, the motivation for learning a new language is determined by the learners' desire to achieve as well as to gain self-confidence in the process. At the level of the learning situation, a variety of factors such as interest, relevance, level of expectancy, and satisfaction, come into play. There are also, at this level, teacher-specific motivational components that include the drive to please the teacher and to socialize with the teacher. There are also group-specific motivational components including the classroom behavior and goal as a group. This latter includes the norms of behavior, rewards, and dynamics of the group.

Dornyei also conducted, with two other colleagues, Clement and Noels (Oxford, 1996), a survey among Hungarian secondary school learners of English that showed that indeed "motivation to learn foreign language in the classroom environments entails more than a social and pragmatic aspect." (Oxford, 1996, p.93) This research also emphasizes the weight of specific learning situations in explaining the motivation for acquiring new knowledge.

A totally different approach to investigating motivation is to see it within a more holistic framework. For example, while Eharman (1996) wanted to investigate the affective variables among adult foreign language learners, motivation was but one of the variables together with others such as strategy, anxiety, and self-sufficiency. Since this

research was done on a large scale, many instruments were used, mainly questionnaires developed by other researchers. In looking at motivation, Eharman developed a questionnaire regarding motivational strategies specifically for the purposes of this research .

Of particular interest in this study was the fact that the participants were learners of a variety of languages, 32 in total, most not commonly taught, ranging from Indian dialects to African languages and other European tongues. The data that was collected from the questionnaire were analyzed statistically and described the learners in terms of their motivation. The author admits that the instrument that was used could not capture the detail of students' perceptions. Therefore she suggested, "Ideally, these instruments would be analyzed together with qualitative case information on the respondents, so that respondent interpretations of the items would shed light on some of the contradictory or anomalous findings" (Schmidt 1996, pp.126).

Looking at motivation as one component of a larger group of variables is also the approach of a study done by Samimy, Komiya, and Tabuse (1992). They studied the correlation between learners' affective variables and the rate of retention in the learning process. Motivation was one of the components that was included in the affective variables together with attitude, personality, achievements, and classroom behavior. Their findings show that there is a correlation between students' motivation and achievements, but not between students' motivation and their decision to continue or leave the learning process.

Other researchers are not only classifying types of motivation, but are trying to find ways to measure it. The assumption that these researchers make is that the degree of

motivation depends on the difficulty of the language that is learned. They assume that the more difficult the language, the greater the motivation necessary to undertake it. At the same time, they see the connection between the learners' degree of motivation and the learning strategies they choose to use. A study done by Abo, Okada, and Oxford (Scmidt 1996, pp. 133-153) compared two groups of native English learners studying foreign languages. One group was learning a difficult language, Japanese, and the other an easy language, Spanish. The instruments that were used in this research were the Modified SILL, (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) (Oxford, 1990), and the Modified AFF (Affective Survey) (Eharman and Oxford, 1991). The statistically analyzed data showed that the learners of Japanese were more motivated than the learners of Spanish and they were also using a wider range of learning strategies than the learners of Spanish.

In addition, some research on motivation has also raised the question of whether it is in fact necessary for a learner to initiate the learning process with a high level of motivation. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) claim that there are studies that describe how achievement sometimes can increase motivation and attitude, and therefore they claim that motivation is not crucial to undertaking the learning process.

d. Summary

The above review demonstrates the different aspects of the research on motivation in foreign language acquisition. While the Gardner study established the initial framework for this discussion, others saw the need to expand and to go beyond. Many researchers agree that the socio-educational model is crucial in understanding this phenomenon, but at the same time they explore the issue of motivation in connection

with other aspects, such as its relation to specific learning situations, to a specific language, or even to specific learners.

The main tools for this research are the use of questionnaires and surveys, either those which are designed specifically for each piece of research or those created by others and modified. In most cases, the results are analyzed statistically. The need to include different tools such as qualitative methods is starting to gain more attention in the research.

2. 1.2 Foreign Language Anxiety

a. Introduction

Many foreign language educators are familiar with those learners who freeze whenever they are asked to express themselves orally in class, or fear failure on tests, or even refuse to communicate with native speakers. Foreign language researchers recognize this phenomenon as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). The recognition that anxiety poses several potential problems for the students of foreign language because it can interfere with the acquisition and production of the new language" (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991, p. 86), has given rise to a wide range of research that attempts to understand the nature of foreign language anxiety.

The research in this area seeks to answer the following questions :

(a) What kind of anxiety is language anxiety?

(b) What behaviors are associated with it?

(c) How does language anxiety affects language learning?

Other research focuses on questions regarding the tools used to measure and identify language anxiety. In the following review, I will try to demonstrate how the research in this area attempts to answer these questions.

b. What kind of anxiety is language anxiety?

According to Tittle (ACTFL, Annual Conference in Philadelphia 1996), there are two main trends in the research on foreign language anxiety: in the first, the researcher focuses on how learners suffering from general anxiety experience anxiety while learning a new language; in the second, the researcher recognizes the existence of a form of anxiety which is unique to foreign language learning.

The first trend is termed “trait anxiety” by psychologists (Eharman, 1996, p.148) and is seen as a stable part of the learner's personality. The second type of anxiety is termed "state anxiety," and is manifested only in a specific situation. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) elaborate on the above differences and add that there is a third type of anxiety which they term "situational anxiety." While "state anxiety" refers to anxious feelings in a particular moment or time, "situational anxiety" can be seen as a trait anxiety limited to a given context.

Other researchers define anxiety differently. For example, Daly (Horowitz, and Young, 1991) views communication apprehension as a key to understanding learners' anxiety. For him, an underlying fear of communicating orally, whether it originates in the process of general education, or whether it is tied to the particular situation, is the cause of anxiety at all levels, including foreign language.

Other researchers prefer to view anxiety as one of the many variables that construct the learner's personality and influence learning. For example, Scovel (1978) claims that anxiety is a cluster of learners' variables that consist of emotional states which he borrows from the Buddhist philosophy of "vedana" (feeling) to describe. Anxiety thus can be viewed, not as a simple unitary construct but as a cluster of affective states influenced by factors which are intrinsic and extrinsic to the foreign language learners (1978, p.131).

Horowitz, Horowitz and Cope (1986) prefer to disconnect the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety from its relationship with other disciplines and claim that there is an anxiety that is particular to language learning. Young argues (1991) that this last theory is lately gaining much support from the recent field research. She finds the sources of anxiety tied into the particular situation of acquiring the language and finds anxiety linked to the following factors:

1. personal and interpersonal anxieties;
2. learner's belief about language learning;
3. instructor's belief about language teaching;
4. instructor-learner interaction;
5. classroom procedures; and
6. language testing. (Young , 1991, p. 427)

Under the first rubric, "personal and interpersonal anxieties," Young mentions learners' low self-esteem and competitiveness. She also includes here the other social anxiety issues referenced earlier and regarded by other researchers as the main explanation for foreign language anxiety.

Under the second rubric, "learner's belief about language learning," Young includes what the students consider most important to learn and how to learn it. For example, there are students who believe that pronunciation is the key to success, while others believe that language can be learned only in the country where it is used. In terms of "instructors' beliefs," (rubric # 3), we find those who think that correction is more important in the learning and others who view their role as drill sergeants. These views also influence the "interaction between the instructor and the learners" (rubric # 4). In terms of "classroom procedures," (rubric # 5), it was found that activities such as speaking in front of the class or oral tests can cause anxiety as well. Tests also serve as a source of anxiety with fear of grades being one among the stressors.

In her article, Young mentions the unique view that Krashen and Terrel hold with regard to foreign language anxiety being linked with group identity within the class. They claim that while learning a foreign language, the learner becomes a member of a group of learners and as such there arise concerns regarding performance and behavior in this group that can cause stress and anxiety. This view implies that language learning anxiety is tied into an existential anxiety regarding individual identity and group membership identity. Learners fear losing part of their self-image while absorbing foreign concepts in the format of learning a new language.

As we can see from the above review, there is a wide range of explanations of the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety. While some researchers view it as a manifestation of general anxiety, others view it in a more particular way by claiming that foreign language anxiety is a unique phenomenon related specifically to the process of learning foreign language. Foss and Reitzel (1988) argue that language anxiety is more

compounded than general anxiety because the learners must cope not only with their fear of public speaking, but must do so in a different language, which makes their effort dual.

c. What behaviors are associated with it?

Most researchers recognize certain modes of behavior and physical signs as manifestations of anxiety. Young (1991) mentions Leary who lists some behavioral patterns associated with general social anxiety, such as nervous behavior, or playing with hair or clothes. Such anxious students also avoid speaking or try to minimize their oral communication. Other behaviors include "over" interaction when the learners try to impress the teacher by smiling or nodding their heads in agreement. They also try to over-socialize. Others who analyze the specific anxiety of language note features such as sweaty palms and accelerated heartbeat, freezing up or forgetting a word, or even avoiding talking in the language, but rather talking about the language, in that way they avoiding direct contact with the language itself.

Horowitz & Horowitz and Young, (1991) find particular signs of foreign language anxiety in the classroom setting. They claim that those who suffer from this anxiety avoid sharing personal issues during class, claim to forget items that they really did not understand well, and tend to over-study for tests. Learners' use of language can also indicate anxiety, according to Horowitz and Steinberg (Young 1991); those learners who tend to be concerned about their answers and avoid interpretation, manifest anxiety.

Baily (1983) argues that competitiveness can also be considered a sign of anxiety. In her research she found that students who compare themselves to their classmates and try to exceed them in performance are usually very anxious and nervous; some of them

even become hostile to their peers as a result of their competitiveness. They also attempt to gain attention and continuous approval from the teacher.

Young (1991) mentions other signs that were identified by the researchers, such as avoiding eye contact, joking, delaying the learning process, cutting class, becoming indifferent, and sitting in the last row to avoid participation

d. How does language anxiety affect language learning?

Researchers such as Scovel and Young (Horowitz and Young, 1991, p. 15) admit that the research regarding the relationship between foreign language anxiety and foreign language learning has produced mixed results. One group of studies show a clear connection between the two, although the role of anxiety may facilitate or debilitate the learning; the second group of studies does not support the above connections; and the third group of studies show unexpected results in terms of the relationships between the existence of anxiety and the learning process (Young, 1990).

Despite the ambiguities inherent in these studies, there is still a clear concern among researchers. While the debilitating anxiety "gets in the way of learning" (Eharman, 1996, p. 145), the facilitating anxiety may help learners by motivating them. As we noted above, anxiety can be both debilitating and facilitating in terms of language acquisition.

Debilitating Anxiety

According to Stevick (1996, p. 138), psychological studies demonstrate a connection between emotion or stress and the ability to capture and retain information,

sometimes to the advantage and sometimes to the disadvantage of learners. Stevick notes that foreign language research seeks to identify where and when this interference occurs. Stevick mentions MacIntyre and Gardner's study in which they suggested three opportunities for interference to occur during the learning process (Stevick, p. 99): first, when the information is "on its way in," the initiation of processing the data can be prevented by a state of anxiety; second, when the "information is being processed," the state of anxiety can limit the amount of information to be processed; third, when the learner "is trying to retrieve information" from the memory, anxiety can impede the retrieval process.

Stevick also notes that MacIntrye and Gardner believe, based on their studies, that foreign language anxiety is best explained as "state anxiety" and "general anxiety." They also recognize "communication anxiety" as negatively affecting the learning process. In a study they conducted among English-speaking learners of French, they found that the fear of speaking in class or outside class was negatively correlated with performance.

In a related study, Young (1990) examined communication anxiety from the learners' perspective. The participants were 135 university-level beginning Spanish students and 109 high school Spanish students. The findings show that it was speaking in front of a class, rather than speaking in a foreign language, that caused anxiety. The fear of speaking in front of the class may also be based on the fear of negative evaluation of their proficiency by their peers and the instructor. The students also admitted that speaking on a subject that does not interest them, or that on which they were not prepared, increased their level of anxiety.

Because of the limitation in scope of this paper, I will only mention the fact that there are numerous studies that mainly look at the relationship between test anxiety and test performance as well as anxiety and oral performance. Most of them show negative influence on performance, but some findings demonstrate mixed results (Young 1986).

Although the issue of test anxiety and performance is more complicated since other variables can influence the learners' performance, it is easier to identify the relationship between oral test performance and anxiety. For example, Steinberg (Horowitz and Young, 1991, p. 58) compared two groups of learners, those with induced anxiety, and those with no anxiety, and found that the responses from the anxious group tended to be less personal and less subjective than the other group.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) conclude, based on several studies, that in the first stages of learning, learners may experience anxiety unrelated to the language itself, but arising from the context of learning, such as classroom anxiety or test anxiety. If, in the course of the learning, the learners' attitude towards the language is negative, then they may develop language anxiety that can in turn negatively influence their learning.

Facilitating anxiety

Unlike debilitating anxiety, facilitating anxiety helps learners achieve their goals. In her research, Baily (1983) examines competitiveness and anxiety among adult learners of a second language. In her findings she concludes that:

> competitiveness arises when the comparison is emotive rather than objective. If the comparison is invidious (i.e., the learner perceives himself as lacking) such competitiveness can lead to anxiety. It may also lead to active competition, either through increased personal efforts to master the language or through striving to outdo other students. (Baily, 1983, p. 96)

In other words, there are certain situations in which anxiety motivates learners to improve their learning efforts.

e. Measuring and Identifying Language Anxiety

One of the most challenging tasks that researchers in this area face is to find the tools that will help determine the presence, as well as the level, of anxiety among foreign language learners. According to MacIntrye and Gardner (1991), the use of a scale is the most common tool to measure anxiety. There are several specific scales that have been adapted from the field of psychology to measure trait and state anxiety. There are language specific scales that include the French Anxiety Scale that was developed by Gardner and Smythe in 1975. The English Use Anxiety Scale was developed by Clement, Gardner and Smythe in 1977. In 1980, they also developed the English Test Anxiety Scale that was adapted to other languages, including French and Spanish. In 1986 Horowitz et al. developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) that includes 33 items. That same year, Ely also developed an additional scale. Researchers use scales in their experiments with students in different contexts in which learners can experience anxiety, for example, before tests.

In an effort to determine the relationship between anxiety and oral performance, Young (1986) gave participants an anxiety scale that was constructed for this specific research, before they took an oral exam. After the test she compared the results of the

exams with the results of the participants' anxiety levels. Young's method is the most commonly used in this area, although we can find researchers who use other approaches as well. Bailey (1983) used learners' diaries as resources to identify and measure anxiety. She asked the participants to record their experiences and feelings during their learning process. She also included her own experiences. The analysis of the diaries was based on the common themes which emerged from them. In other research, Price (Horowitz and Young, 1991 PP. 102-103) investigated learners' perspectives on their language anxiety by using a questionnaire to identify those with a high level of anxiety, and then interviewing fifteen of them using both open-ended and structured questions. Although both types of methods are used, my review of the research indicates that the anxiety scale is still the most popular.

f. Summary

From the above review we can conclude that anxiety plays a significant role in the process of learning a foreign language. Based on their studies and measurements of anxiety, researchers have developed theories and recommendations regarding the treatment of anxiety. The recommendations are many and varied, and they are all intended to help learners and teachers to reduce the level of anxiety in the classroom; in particular when the anxiety debilitates the learners. Different teaching methods have been developed as a result of these studies as well as simple drills and exercises that are intended to help teachers help learners. At the same time many researchers and practitioners are still puzzled and continue to try to find the best way to define this anxiety and develop the optimal tool to investigate and address it.

As both practitioner and researcher in the field, I believe that while anxiety can play a significant role in learning, the extent of research in the field is not in proportion to the reality of the problem. Although researchers agree that no more than 30% of the students of foreign language are afflicted by anxiety serious enough to interfere with their language learning, the findings identify behaviors which can be found in all people in learning situations (in other courses such as math or history for example). Moreover, the described behaviors are often contradictory, ranging from avoidance and withdrawal to a high level of socialization and participation. Since the basic question of how language is learned remains a puzzle, it seems that many researchers and practitioners are overly zealous in their attempt to understand their students. In other words, the learners' anxiety explored by the researchers may reflect their own anxiety regarding the process of language acquisition and their efficacy as teachers.

2.1.3 Foreign Language Learning Strategies

a. Introduction

Another area in which researchers have attempted to gain a better understanding of foreign language learners is that of learning strategies. According to Yutaka (1997), different researchers define these strategies differently. Yutaka gives as an example Oxford, who defines learning strategies as "Specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self directed, more effective" (Yutaka, 1997, p. 3). Chamot, on the other hand, views strategies as "techniques and approaches" (Yutaka p. 3). Yet, on a different occasion, Chamot and O'Malle define it as "the special

thoughts and behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information" (Yutaka, 1997, p3.) Rubin and Bialystok view the strategies in a more general way, and define them as means that are constructed by the learner to support learning (Yutaka, 1997, p.3). The research in this area for the last twenty years has focused mainly on the strategies used by good learners (Oxford, 1989). Although there is still no agreement among the researchers regarding measurement methods or the definition of different strategies, they all agree on the great importance of learning about them. In this review, I will present the main trends in this research.

b. The categories of foreign language learning strategies.

Yutaka (1997) states that there are two approaches to language strategies. Early researchers focused on strategies for language use as well as for language learning. For example, Taron (Yutaka, p. 4) included communication strategies and production strategies as part of language use. These strategies include attempts to create ways for communications, such as transfer or paraphrase, as well as simplification and discourse planning. Yutaka criticizes this categorization by saying that we cannot know if attempts by a learner to communicate are not also used for learning purposes.

O'Malle and Chamot developed another way of categorizing strategies. According to Yutaka, they were influenced by cognitive theory and therefore categorized strategies of language learning according to the "level or type of information " (Yutaka, p. 6) the learners process. The categories they identify are:

- Metacognitive strategies that help learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate the success of language learning;

- Cognitive strategies that support the process of internalizing and enhancing the learned information; and,
- Social /affective strategies including the ways in which the learners choose to interact with their peers and instructors, as well as to overcome emotional issues such as attitudes and anxieties.

Oxford (1989) developed Chamot and O'Malle's approach and distinguished between "direct" and "indirect" strategies. Since I find her categories to be more inclusive, I will elaborate on them here.

Direct strategies for foreign language learning

Oxford defines the direct strategies as those that "require mental processing of the language" (Oxford 1989 P 37) such as memory, cognitive, and compensation.

Memory strategies

Memory strategies help learners to remember material by (1) creating mental linkages such classification and association; (2) grouping the material around a specific topic such as types or creation of stories; and (3) utilizing sounds and visual images through word mapping and pictorial connection as well as similarities in sound and meaning. This last strategy includes the use of imagery in which learners either associate the new word with a picture or draw a picture that reflects the meaning of the word. The use of semantic mapping is another visual method in which the learners draw maps of words that are related by a key concept, usually a common root. The use of keywords is another technique in which the learners associate the new word with a word taken from their native language that has a similar sound, format or meaning. For example, the word

"Lahit" in Hebrew means a popular item and it sounds like the English "hit," a word with similar sound and secondary or slang meaning.

Another memory strategy is the reviewing process which involves memorizing. A particular memorization type is referred to as "spiraling," in which learners regularly go back to the learned material and review it. Learners who prefer the use of movement use strategies that require them to employ action in the process of learning by physically responding to the language that they hear.

Cognitive strategies

According to Oxford, cognitive strategies are the most popular among the learners, probably because all the strategies in this category let the learners manipulate and transform the target language (Oxford, 1989, p. 40). Oxford identifies four types of cognitive strategies: (1) practice that helps learners reinforce the learned material; (2) skimming or scanning, which enables learners to get the idea of what they read or hear very quickly; (3) analytical activities that help the learner reason regarding language elements; and (4) activities that help learners to create with the language.

Compensation strategies

Compensation strategies "enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitation of knowledge" (Oxford, 1989, p. 47). When learners lack grammar and vocabulary, they use different techniques to help them continue to use the language. These techniques include guessing intelligently in listening and reading by using linguistics or non-linguistic clues such as, pictures, knowledge of context, situation, text structures. Other strategies help learners to overcome limitations in speaking and writing by using techniques such as adjusting the communications to reflect

the knowledge of the user, not precisely discussing the topic, making up words from their own language and/or using circumlocutions or synonyms in order to avoid the need to use the precise word or phrase in the target language.

Indirect strategies

Oxford (1989, p.135) identifies three types of indirect strategies that support the process of language learning: metacognitive, affective, and social.

Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies are methods that allow learners to organize their learning by "centering" or focusing, arranging, planning and evaluating the process. It is interesting to note that although metacognitive strategies are important in language learning, research (Oxford, 1989 p. 138) shows that most learners do not employ them frequently.

Metacognitive methods for focusing on learning include the ability of learners to view the material in the context of the whole process of learning, and to connect it to vocabulary and formats previously acquired. The set of strategies that helps learners arrange and plan for their learning includes ways in which the learners become more educated about how language is learned and how to organize their learning so that they will achieve optimal results. The evaluation is done either by learner's noticing systematically their own errors, or by measuring the progress of their knowledge and ability in the target knowledge. However, most students prefer cognitive to metacognitive methods.

Affective strategies

Affective strategies help learners gain control over factors such as emotions, attitude, motivation, and values. It is important to control these factors since they influence the learning process at all levels. It has been recognized by researchers that good language learners know how to take control of "their emotions and attitudes about learning" (Oxford, 1989, p.140). Oxford claims that these strategies are "woefully underused" (Oxford, 1989, p. 141)--only 1 out of 24 students in her study reported using them. The identified strategies include techniques to lower anxiety, encourage oneself and self-assess emotions .

Social factors

Oxford believes, as do many other researchers, that language learning is a "form of social behavior; it is communication, and communication occurs between and among people" (Oxford, p. 1989 144). Therefore, social strategies are necessary. There are strategies which help learners interact in the social setting of the language class, such as developing the ability to ask questions or cooperating with peers, as well as strategies that help to develop cultural understanding which will facilitate empathy and make communication with native speakers of the language easier.

c. The factors that influence the choice of strategies.

Since language learners do not use all strategies all of the time, researchers have concluded that there are various factors that influence the learners in their choice of strategies. Oxford (1990) and Yutaka (1997) both summarize these factors which reflect the learner as well as the context in which the language is being studied. Factors that are determined by the learner include his/her level of performance, age, gender, personality,

and awareness of their learning process. Other factors include future career plans, nationality or ethnicity, and the length of time spent studying the language.
Oxford claims (Magnan, 1990, p.37) that researchers found strong connections between the use of strategy and performance. They found that good language learners employ more strategies than the poor ones, and usually use the more facilitative strategies. Nevertheless, Oxford makes the point that it is hard to determine the number of strategies used by good learners, or even to suggest a list of their most frequently used strategies. The most detailed study of the frequency of the use of strategies has shown that there are many factors that influence the choice of strategies and their frequency.

There are studies that claim that the language studied influenced the choice of strategies (Magnan, 1990 pp. 37-38). For example, Russian learners report greater use of strategies than students of Spanish. Oxford (Magnan, 1990 p.38) argues that this finding can be misleading since there is the possibility that since Russian is a more difficult language, only wiser and more experienced learners undertake it. Duration and level of study also influence learners' choice of strategies. Oxford (Magnan, 1990 p.38) lists a number of studies that clearly show that learners at the advanced level use more task appropriate strategies compared to the lower level learners. Other research shows that learners who are more aware of their learning process tend to use more strategies and to be more effective in their learning. This is especially true for upper level learners. The age factor was not explored sufficiently to determine whether it is a factor in choosing a learning strategy. The few who examined this issue concluded that age was not a factor in making the choices but rather individual tendencies were determinative.

Researchers have also tried to examine the connection between gender and the use of strategies. Most of the research so far has shown that females tend to use more strategies than males. Oxford claims that this line of investigation has not yet yielded conclusive results.

According to Oxford and Nyikos (1989), the most powerful factor that influences the choice of language strategies is motivation. Several studies show that learners' motivation to achieve a certain goal through the study of the language determines the type of strategies that they use. (Magnan, 1990, p. 39). Personality is also an important factor. Competitiveness (Baily, 1983) and lack of inhibitions influence learners' choice of strategy, as well as career orientations. For example, professionals with backgrounds in education, social sciences, and the humanities were found to use more independent strategies or functional practice. They also preferred the authentic use of the language (as it used in the country in which the target language is in use). On the other hand, language specialists use a wider variety of strategies compared to non-specialists who study the language (Magnan, 1990, p.40). It is interesting to note that even ethnicity and nationality are factors in learner strategies. For example, it was found that Asian students tend to memorize more than other learners, probably because that is how they were taught in their country of origin (Magnan, 1990, p. 40). Indeed the influence of the learners' tradition may cause them to chose to continue to use the strategies they have used to before; very few leave their paradigms and adopt new ways of learning.

d. The sociocultural approach to language learning strategies.

As I mentioned before, the research in the area of foreign language strategies has three main aims: to identify and categorize strategies, to understand the factors that influence the learners' choice of strategies, and to employ this information in order to improve language learning. Donato and McCormick (1994) view learners' choice of strategies differently. They claim there is a need to understand strategy choice within the context of socio-cultural theory. This theory states that language strategies are developed by learners as a result of classroom activities and social dynamics; "the social life of the classroom is central to the issue of an individual's strategy use" (Donato & McCormick, 1994, p. 454). Basing their investigations on the theories of Vigotsky and Leontiev ((Donato & McCormick, 1994, p. 454), they seek to understand how classroom socialization relates to an individual's development of language learning strategies. Their study examines advanced learners of French conversation in a university course where students were taught the social function of the language. At the same time, the students were asked to document and to reflect on their learning. They were also required to keep portfolios of their learning activities. Through analysis of the data, the researchers concluded that, indeed, learners developed their strategies as a "by-product of classroom culture" (Donato & McCormick, 1994, p. 462). They argue that there is evidence for learners' growth and use of strategies emerging out of the social dynamic of the class. This approach is distinctive in that it does not look at learners individually, but as a part of a culture in a changing process that influences their learning strategies. Thus, Donato and McCornick question the notion that strategies are teachable by simply training learners; they argue that strategies grow out of the development of a dynamic classroom culture.

e. Methods for identifying language learning strategies and their use.

Researchers use a variety of methods to identify language learning strategies. Ellis (1994) reports on attempts to identify strategies by observing students learning in a classroom setting. These attempts were reported as failures since researchers such as Cohen and Aphek, and Rubin (Ellis, 1994) failed to achieve comprehensive results from these methods. The most effective, popular, and successful ways to identify the strategies are structured interviews and questionnaires. Ellis mentions a large number of studies that use questionnaires (Ellis 1994, p. 534). These questionnaires ask the learners to comment on specific learning activities. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning or SILL, is an example of such a questionnaire. The SILL was developed for use by the Army Research Institute for the Defense Language Institute and then adapted to other language learners. It contains 121 items that require learners to indicate the type of strategy they use and its frequency. Diaries and case studies are also popular and effective ways to investigate the strategies phenomenon. Thinking out loud is another method that was employed by the researchers. The learners were requested to articulate the way they act and process the information while it is happening. This method causes difficulties when learners have problems articulating. Sometimes, researchers try to discern strategies while letting pairs of learners discuss ways of achieving particular goals. It is notable that all of these methods depend directly on the reports that the learners provide.

2.1.4. Foreign Language Attitude

As we can see above, many researchers view attitude in foreign language learning as an integral part of motivation. For example, in their "Socio-Educational Theory,"

Gardner et al. (1972) view attitude as an important element that influences learners' motivations. They believe that learners' attitudes towards the target language as well as towards the community where the target language is in use, influence their level of motivation. Other researchers view attitude as an independent element that influences language learning, and therefore treat it differentially. Ellis (1994) notes that "learners manifest different types of attitudes" (Ellis 1994 p. 198) including attitudes towards the target language and towards its speakers and their culture, as well as towards the values that the target language represents and the possibilities of its use. Ellis claims that the level of attitude influences the level of proficiency achieved by the learners. According to Ellis, Baker (Ellis 1994 p 199) characterizes attitude as a cognitive as well as affective element. He believes that since there are degrees of both positive and negative attitudes, they can be considered dimensional. According to him, attitudes are learned, and although they tend to influence the learners' behavior persistently, they can be modified. It is interesting to note that while Baker sees the connection between learners' actions and attitude, he does not view this relationship as being as crucial as Ellis does. Ellis (1994, p.199) also mentions success as a reinforcing attitude and lack of success as a cause for negative attitudes.

Attitude can be measured both directly and indirectly. The direct method uses evaluation, self-reporting, and questionnaires. The indirect methods involve the Matched-Guise Technique (explained earlier in connection with motivation), as well as the Spolsky Identity Scale.

The role of attitude in enhancing language learning has led researchers to try to discover how a positive attitude can be created. For example, Mantle-Bromley and Miller

(1991) examined the effect of multicultural lessons on attitudes of students of Spanish. The research studied 408 high school learners of Spanish who received cultural education in the form of lessons that aimed to improve students' attitude towards the Spanish-speaking cultures. Topics such as the cultural values of both the American and the Hispanic world were presented to the students as well as exercises to raise the cultural awareness of learners and to explore their motivation for learning Spanish. Although not all learners improved their attitudes and some even became frustrated by the learning process and developed negative attitudes, a significant number of students were positively influenced by the lessons, and in some cases they improved their grades. In other words, this study shows a strong connection between cultural understanding and positive attitude that may lead to higher achievements.

In another study, Davis, Gorell, Kline, and Hsieh (1992) examined the attitudes of advanced learners of foreign language towards the study of literature. Not only do the findings show a positive attitude, but also indicate that the type of material as well as the style of learning and the style of the instructions influence this attitude. It is believed by these researchers that attitude is not only crucial to the learning process but that it can be learned and modified, and therefore researchers make an effort to understand its impact.

2.1.5. Foreign Language Aptitude

Ellis (1985) defines aptitude as "...the specific ability a learner has for learning a second language." This is hypothesized to be separate from the general ability to master academic skills, which is refereed to as "intelligence" (1985, p. 293).

Researchers are still debating many issues surrounding the concept of aptitude, such as the connection between intelligence and aptitude. According to Ellis (1994, p. 495), Pimsler argues that intelligence in general is an important component of aptitude, while others, such as Oller and Perkins (Ellis 1994, p. 496) claim that verbal intelligence is crucial for the existence of language aptitude. Oller (Ellis 1994, p. 497) also believes that the ability to use language and intelligence are the same and therefore should not be separated. Skehan and Obler (Ellis, 1994, p. 498) clearly conclude that there is no need for cognitive superiority in order to study a language. However, Ellis argues (1994 p. 498) that Skehan, by interpreting Wells' study in which the learners of language who scored high in the aptitude test were also able to handle a decontextualized test, actually used their intelligence (Ellis 1994, p 498). This ability can be viewed as cognitive language academic proficiency that was defined by Cummins (Ellis 1994, p 499) and was interpreted by Oller and Perkins as being identical to the factors that form intelligence in general.

While Cummins discusses achievement, Krashen's work relates to process. Krashen distinguishes between acquisition and learning (Ellis, 1985, p.113). While acquisition is, according to his definition, the process of gaining language subconsciously, learning is a conscious process mainly in a classroom setting. He claims that the aptitude test only measures the subject's aptitude for learning and is not able to measure the subject's aptitude for acquisition.

Still unclear are the particular components of aptitude and how they can be measured. From a study that was conducted in 1986 among learners of Arabic in Britain (Ellis, 1994, p. 498), Skehan concluded that different learners possess different

components of aptitude--some are grammatically sensitive and others have strong memories. He concluded from this research that there are different kinds of foreign language learners. This study opened the way to aptitude tests also which also serve as tests for identifying language learning styles.

Research on aptitude was very popular in the 1960s and 1970s. At that time the audio-lingual methodology dominated; language learning was perceived as based on communication skills. There has been recent research reviving interest in this area. The issues that are currently being discussed are: the revision of the components of foreign language attitude, language aptitude, ways of measuring aptitude, the links between aptitude, and other differences in learners such as personality and learning styles. Researchers also question how well language aptitude predicts success in language learning. For example, Carroll (1990) suggests using the new research in the area of neuropsychology and cognitive psychology in order to expand and upgrade the current aptitude tests. He also claims that the definition of success should be broader and that aptitude tests should be structured to identify abilities in language at different stages rather than in general.

It is noteworthy that there also were attempts to revalidate the existing language tests by conducting comparative studies. Parry and Child (1991) compared the test, VORD, the latest one to be created, with the MLAT and found that the latter is still a better test for determining aptitude.

Oxford (Parry and Stansfield 1990) examines the connections between aptitude and other's learners components. She claims, for example, that learning style "might be viewed as a component of aptitude" (Parry and Stansfield, 1990, p. 107). She bases this

claim on several studies that were done in this area, mainly by Bialystok and Frohlich in 1978 and Parry in 1984 which found that learners who possess high aptitude for foreign languages tend to have specific learning styles, tended to be field independent, accurate in responding, cognitively complex to a mild degree, and flexible in cognitive control.

In terms of the relationship between learning strategies and aptitude, according to Oxford (Parry and Standfield 1990) there are only a few studies that can shed light on this issue, but from them it seems that those learners with high aptitude for language are very clear and articulate in describing their strategies. Oxford implies that they probably use metacognitive strategies that require high intelligence and include "noticing, evaluating, and improving one's own performance" (Parry and Stansfield, 1990, p. 108.). Eharman (Parry and Stansfield, 1990, p.126) concludes from a 1986 study with learners at the Foreign Service Institute that there is a need to broaden the discussion of foreign language aptitude. She claims that aptitude tests examine only the internal characteristics of individuals. Since the goal of the aptitude test is to predict success in foreign language learning, it should be viewed in more general way by taking into account all the components that relate to this issue such as cognition, motivation, learning style, learning strategies, and so on.

The discussion regarding learners' aptitude for learning foreign language should be seen, in my view, as part of a larger discussion. The professionals in the foreign language community consist of two major groups: practitioners, including teachers and policy makers, and researchers. Both groups are searching for an answer to the same question: how is foreign language learned? They hope that the answer will make teachers more effective and help researchers predict factors for success in learning the language.

Focusing on defining and testing for language aptitude is one of the many partial ways to answer this question. Aptitude definers say that certain physical and mental conditions of learners will make them learn better. As a practitioner in the field, although I agree that there is a need to understand the role of aptitude in foreign language learning, I concur with Eharman that aptitude is only one of the many components necessary for successful learning. Language acquisition is the sum of many components and therefore it should be viewed in a larger context.

2.1.6 The Age Factor in Foreign Language Learning

a. Introduction

Researchers and practitioners in the field of language learning agree that the age of the learners is a major factor in the learning process. Although most agree that language can be learned at any age, the main concern is to identify the optimal age at which to learn a foreign language successfully.

Researchers are divided in this matter into two main camps: "the younger the better" group and "the older the better" group. Among the first group there is a subgroup of researchers who claim that an early age is optimal in learning language only in certain specific respects.

b. The younger the better

This position maintains that younger second/foreign language learners are more efficient and successful than older learners. Singleton (1989) examined the research that compared adult immigrants to their children and revealed that the latter acquired the

second language more quickly and more successfully. For example, Kessler and Idars (Singleton, 1989, p. 86) compared the morphological development of a Vietnamese woman who immigrated to the USA with her four-year-old daughter and found that while the mother improved her abilities by 17%, her daughter improved by 74%.

c. The older the better

This position argues that an older language learner is globally more efficient and more successful than a younger learner. Those who maintain this position base their conclusion on several studies which compared groups of learners who study the language in formal settings. For example, Politzer and Weiss (Singleton, 1989, p. 96) compared elementary school learners of French at different grade levels with high school learners of French at different grade levels. They found that in specific areas of the learned language such as vocabulary and pronunciation, there was a general improvement of scores with increasing age in all tests.

In a similar experiment, Smith and Braine (Singleton, 1989, p.96) taught people of different ages a miniature artificial language and found while testing the learners' progress, which adults performed better than children.

d. The younger the better in acquiring some aspects of the target language.

This position maintains that there are some specific language elements that children will acquire better. The first element is native-like accent which younger learners seem to acquire much more successfully in the target language. This aspect was tested on learners in both formal and informal learning environments. For example,

Fataman and Precup (Singleton, 1989, p.104) compared the accent of adults to children in learning English as a second language in the United States. They also compared adults and children who studied English as a foreign language in Mexico. In both cases they found the younger learners scored better in accent. It is interesting to note that the adult learners in both cases scored better in syntax..

There is also a claim that younger learners are better in retaining the language for a longer period. Studies show that children will maintain a language better for longer periods, while adults may function better for shorter periods. This research is based on learners' language production.

e. Why are there differences?

The theories that explain these differences are drawn from various disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, neurology and education and they focus on the learners rather than the production of the language. It is interesting to note that in some cases the theory can support opposite positions.

The aging of the senses

This theory examines the physical aspects of the learners and claims that there is a critical age for second language learning. This theory assumes that in order to acquire a language the learner should have an optimal ability to hear well. The fact that children who suffer from hearing impairment are usually delayed in their language development is used as a proof. Joiner (Singleton, 1989, p.143) suggests that there is evidence from experiments and from data published by the Institute of National Health that auditory

acuity peaks between the ages of 10 to 14. Therefore, he believes that this age range is optimal for second language learning. As with the auditory sense, Joiner claims that since the visual sense declines gradually from age 18, and by the age of 65 half of the population has vision of 20/70 or less, study of a new language is impeded at later ages.

Transfer as a way of acquiring a language

Language learning researchers and language educators are familiar with the concept of transfer as a technique used by learners to acquire a new language. The term "transfer" refers to the fact that learners of second/foreign languages transfer their linguistic habits from their first language to the new language they are learning. The debate among the researchers is at what age it is recommended to start this transfer. Some claim that since at a young age the learner's first language habits are still unsophisticated, transfer at this stage will be better. Bever (Singleton, 1989, p.145) supports this claim, arguing that an adult first language is so developed that it occupies all the "space" that the learner has for languages. Those researchers who believe that learning a second language can be more successful as an adult claim that older learners have more linguistic experience and awareness; therefore, it is easy for them to do the necessary transfer from one language to another.

Neurolinguistics and the critical period.

Neurolinguists study the connection between language learning and the structure of the brain in their attempt to determine the critical period for acquiring a second language. The two main aspects upon which they focus are: what part of the brain is

responsible for language, and what is the effect of the plasticity of the brain on language acquisition. Most research has found that the left hemisphere of the cerebrum (responsible for the higher functions of the brain) is responsible for language development. In terms of the plasticity of the brain, researchers such as Penfield and Robert (Harley, 1986, pp. 8-13), conclude that after age 9 the brain starts to "stiffen" and therefore it becomes more difficult to study a new language, mainly because the mature neural system is less adaptable than the immature.

Lenenberg (Singleton, 1989, p.161) agrees with Singleton (Singleton, 1989, p. 167) who developed the theory of a multiplicity of critical periods. Singleton argues that different aspects of language mature at different periods. For example, he believes that at an early age the brain completes its development for phonetics, and at later periods for syntax and semantics. Albert and Obler (1978), who investigated the brains of bilingual people who had suffered brain damage offer an interesting view of this issue. They concluded that the right hemisphere processes language and that the brain is able to change consistently; its plasticity is modified by the learning process.

Cognitive-based critical period hypothesis

Some researchers pose the question not in terms of the ideal age for acquiring a new language, but in terms of the ideal cognitive stage. Some say this stage occurs around puberty since this is when learners start to construct abstract hypotheses, to look for explanations, to be aware of process, and to have a desire for conscious understanding. They also see puberty as the ideal period because at this stage learners can assess their progress by comparing their knowledge of the target language to their

command of their native language. Their understanding of linguistic structures and vocabulary in their native language facilitate transference to the new language, which leaves them only with the task of learning new symbols that represent those concepts. While some researchers see this as an advantage, others see it as an obstacle. For example, Krashen, Rosansky and Felix (Harley, 1986, p. 8) argue that learners' demand to understand interferes with the natural way of acquiring language. The fact that the learner is more conscious puts him/her under stress that might in fact interrupt the learning process.

Affective and emotional stages of language learners.

Many researchers agree with the premise that emotional life and environmental factors influence learners in their learning process. For this reason, Krashen (Ellis, 1984, p. 106) believes puberty to be a difficult stage at which to learn a new language. According to Piaget, adolescents are more conscious on the one hand, but less willing to open themselves to life on the other; therefore, it is hard for them to accept and conceptualize a new language. Krashen concludes that it's better to learn a new language before or after this stage.

Taylor and Stengal (Singleton, pp.191-192) argue that children are emotionally more open and available to acquire a new language. They base their position on Freud's claim that children are willing to imitate their surroundings more easily since they do not possess the superego adults do. While adults are afraid to make mistakes, children are free from this fear. In order to describe adult difficulty in acquiring language, Stengel explains that since human beings treat aspects of reality in terms of needs and wants,

adults develop libidinal relationships to the objects that represent reality, including vocabulary or terminology. Therefore, he assumes that the libidinal relationship to an object represented by a word in a foreign language is different from its relation to the equivalent word in a native language. According to him this difference explains the possible rejection by adults of a new language, while children are still free from these feelings. Stengal also claims that adults feel anachronistic when starting to learn a new language. They cannot tolerate being in an infantile situation, while children are free from these inhibitions. He believes that teaching children a new language is like giving them a new method of play. The idea that they can communicate with and make use of the language as a tool gives them pleasure.

It seems to me that the argument underlying all of the above-mentioned research is that learners who can integrate more with the language are better learners. Since most of the theories agree that children are free from inhibition in comparison to adults, they are probably better candidates for language learning.

f. Summary

Age appears to be a crucial factor in understanding how foreign language is learned. Although each of the two positions discussed here is supported by research, it seems to me that most researchers agree that the younger the learner the better in terms of acquiring a new language. In my opinion, a language can be learned successfully at any age, since age is not the only factor that shapes the learning process. It is a sum of many aspects including needs, context, motivation, and teaching methods. Therefore, I believe

that the focus of the discussion should not be on the optimal age of language learners, but rather on how to teach most effectively at different stages of development.

2.1.7. Foreign Language Learning Styles

Sternberg (1995) defines learning style as "a way of thinking" (1995, p. 266) and argues that these styles determine not the ability to learn but rather how one uses one's abilities. According to Sternberg, the need to understand learning style originates from the fact that many educators confuse styles with abilities and potential to learn. Since different tasks may require different styles, learners must be flexible in adopting different styles. He believes that styles are learned, and that it is therefore possible to change styles over time according to life circumstances. He also contends (p. 267) that no style is better or worse than another.

Oxford (1990, p. 41) agrees with Sternberg that learning style can be "influenced by the case" (1990 p. 41), although she believes that most of the time it is stable. For Oxford, the term "learning style" embraces four aspects of learning: 1) the cognitive style in which they demonstrate their way of mental functioning, 2) their attitudes that influence their decision as to what part of the learning to emphasize, 3) their ability to choose tasks that fit their styles, and 4) avoiding tasks that do not accord with their style.

Sternberg (1995) argues that theories of learning style were created because psychologists needed to construct a "bridge between their theories of abilities, on the one hand, and their theories of personality on the other" (1995, p. 267). Oxford (1990, p. 41) claims that most of the research in this area examines cognitive style, the most widely known being the study of field independence-dependence. The psychologist Herman

Witkins originally defined these two styles (Sternberg, 1995, p. 267), "field independence being the 'ability to separate key details from confusing background or context', and field dependence, the inability to do so" (Oxford, 1990, p. 41). Oxford reports that the application of research on field independence vs. field dependence to language learning, either in first language or in second language, is unclear. Although there is some evidence that in language tasks that require analytical abilities (such as analyzing words, recognizing roots, and so on), learners who are field independent might have advantage, Oxford believes that the results are not consistent enough to show that this is indeed the case.

Some researchers link the study of the brain with the study of languages. Since some research shows that language learning involves the left hemisphere of the brain, some researchers contend that left brain people are field independent learners (and thus more analytical and more productive linguistically) while right brain people are more field dependent (Oxford, 1990 p. 42). Oxford questions this distinction since she recognizes that the recent research on the relationship between the brain and language study shows that both hemispheres of the brain are involved in language processing.

Somewhat parallel to the theory of field independent and field dependent learning styles is Kolb's widely known dual classification of learners into the reflective observer vs. the active experimenter (Oxford, 1990). Another pairing is those who prefer to learn through concrete experience vs. those who learn best through abstract conceptualization.

An area of learning styles that deserves more attention, according to Oxford, is that of group behavior and interrelations in the language learning environment. What is the impact on learning of competition among peers vs. cooperation or independent study

vs. group interplay? In general, the overall view is that in language learning competitiveness is detrimental since it can cause anxiety, hostility, and fear of failure. Thus, cooperative learning, mainly in small groups, is generally assumed to yield better results in language achievement. Oxford notes that the research examining the relationship between cooperative learning and independent learning is still not conclusive.

Other identified learning styles that are mentioned by Oxford are the reflective vs. impulsive style in which learners who are reflective tend to investigate hypotheses and phenomena more slowly, while impulsive learners tend to be quicker to accept facts and hypotheses. In terms of language learning, Oxford claims the research shows that reflective learners are more accurate, but slower. In terms of performance, while the impulsive learners might perform inaccurately, the reflective tends to be more accurate. Preferences for learning through "auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile" (Oxford, 1990, p. 44) means are found by Reid to be influenced by nationality. She found, for example, that Koreans are more visual learners and Japanese are less auditory or kinesthetic than other learners.

Another identifiable learning style is the leveling vs. sharpening continuum which Oxford describes as a dimension of memory. While the leveling style is characterized by a hazy memory, the sharpening style helps to remember elements very clearly for a long time. Therefore, those who possess the sharpening style can be better learners of foreign language. Another style that may help learners of foreign language to be successful is a tolerance for ambiguity. Learning a foreign language can initially be filled with

ambiguities for learners since they need to adopt a new culture and ways of expression; only those who can be tolerant of this can be successful.

The Meyer-Briggs Type Indicator is an instrument for describing personality types that draws upon aspects of Jungian philosophy. Elements include extroversion-introversion, sensing-intuition, thinking-feeling, and judging-perceiving (Oxford, 1990 p. 45). According to this instrument, each person combines these four dimensions in her/his personality, but at the same time one dimension is always stronger or dominant. In terms of foreign language learning, a study by Eharman and Oxford shows that different styles can succeed differentially in language learning. For example, while those who use the thinking-feeling mode understand better what it means to succeed or fail in language learning, the perceivers tend to keep open to new information since they do not look for closure in the process. Introverts seem to succeed in language learning in the classroom while extroverts do better in informal settings.

Oxford mentions (1990, p. 46) a few other styles of learning that are connected to language learning, such as the constricted-flexible variable of control that includes whether learners can be flexible in the learning process. Other styles still need to be examined in their relationship to foreign language learning.

Most interesting to me is Sternberg's (1995) theory of the "Mental Self-Government." He claims that human mentality can function in various styles just as governments do. There is the legislative style of thinking in which an individual likes to create his/her own rules and ways of carrying out a task. The other self-government style is the executive style in which the individual demonstrates a need to follow the rules and to be told what to do: "They like to follow directions and orders, and evaluate themselves

the same way the system is likely to evaluate them" (Sternberg ,1995, p. 273). Those who function in the judicial style tend to "evaluate rules and procedures" (Sternberg ,1995, p. 273), critique, and offer opinions. Each of the above functions can appear in four forms. The first one mentioned by Sternberg (1995) is the monarchic style. A person who possesses this style tends to be focused and eager to complete a task without interruption. Usually these people are relatively inflexible and devote their attention to a specific task. They do not like to deal with more than one task at the time. The second style is the hierarchic in which the individual tends to prioritize both the tasks and the way of reaching goals. Usually the hierarchical individual is well organized, using lists as a tool to accomplish his/her mission. Another style is the oligarchic--the individual with this style is basically hierarchic, but likes to carry out more than one task at a time, according all of them the same importance. The fourth style is the anarchistic--the individual with this style tends to "pick up a little from here, a little from there" (Sternberg, 1995 p. 278) and to start new tasks before completing the previous ones.

Steinberg (1995) believes that there are five variables that influence style: culture, gender, age, parenting or teaching, and religion. Each variable creates the right framework and environment for either limiting or encouraging different styles. Sternberg (1995) also believes that understanding styles is the key to understanding learning, including foreign language instruction. He believes that a conflict of styles between learners and teachers interferes with the learning process. The content and the goals of the course can also interfere with the interest of the learner. His theory implies—as indeed does the greatest part of the research on learning styles--that teaching should offer a variety of topics and methods so that all learners will find ways to approach the

material, whether it is learning a foreign language or other subjects. This approach requires a focus on the learner rather than on the product/performance.

2.1.8. Gender and Foreign Language Learning

According to Ellis (1994 PP. 202) sociologists differentiate between the words "sex" and "gender." They use the term "sex" to denote the biological aspect of sexual identity, and "gender" to denote the social aspect. Since sociolinguists look at social aspects of language, the term "'gender" is the more relevant for our purposes (Ellis, 1994 p.202). Ellis argues (p. 202) that most of the research on the relationships between gender and second/foreign language acquisition relies on the results of studies done on gender and first language acquisition. In those studies it was found that men use more nonstandard linguistic forms while women tend to accept linguistic change and adapt more easily than men. Women's sensitivity to new patterns of language might therefore suggest that they are more open to new/foreign language and more ready to adapt to it and use it. Indeed, there are some studies that show that female foreign language learners do better than male learners. Ellis (1994) reports (p. 202) on a study done by Burstall in 1975 in which she demonstrates how eight-year-old girls who studied French achieved significantly better than boys in their group. Ellis also mentions other studies, such as the study at the Chinese University in Hong-Kong by Boyle in 1987 (Ellis 1994 p. 202) in which the female learners of English scored better in tests compared to their male counterparts.

Various studies show conflicting results. For example, in terms of vocabulary learning, the above study by Boyle showed also that males in general scored better in

vocabulary memorization than females, while another study by Nikyos (Ellis, 1994 p. 203) in 1990 clearly shows that women memorized German vocabulary better than men. At the same time (Ellis, p. 203) reports on a study done by Bacon in 1992 that concluded that there is no difference in gender in terms of memorization of vocabulary.

The two genders have been compared in terms of other aspects of language learning as well. For example, according to Oxford (1991, p. 39) various studies found differences between female and male learners in terms of their learning styles. Shipman and Shipman (Oxford, 1991, p. 4) concluded in 1985 that male adolescents were found to perform with "somewhat more field independence than do females" (Oxford, 1991, p. 42). In a 1975 study, Witkin and Berry (Oxford, 1991, p. 42) found that culture influenced the differences between males and females as language learners.

Other studies examined the relationship between gender and motivation in relation to language learning. Ellis reports on three studies that concluded that females are more motivated than males. He mentioned the Burstall 1975 research (Ellis,1994, pp. 202-203) which found that low-achieving males studying French were more likely to drop out of the course than low-achieving females. Therefore, she concluded that the female attitude to language learning was more positive. Gardener and Lambert reached the same conclusion when they investigated the motivation of learners of French in Canada in 1972. Sopolsky found that immigrant females who studied Hebrew in Israel had more positive attitudes towards the language, the country, and its people than their male counterparts.

There are conflicting results in terms of which gender tends to have more instrumental motivation. Ellis (1994, p.203) mentions Ludwig's study in 1989 that found

male learners of foreign language to be more instrumentally motivated, but another study by Bacon and Finneman in 1992 (Ellis, p. 203) found that female learners of Spanish at the university level were more functionally motivated than male learners.

There is some evidence from a variety of studies that there are differences in the ways in which each gender learns a new language. For example, Gass and Varonis, in 1986 (Ellis, p. 203) found that "men use the opportunities to interact to produce more output, whereas the women use it to obtain more input" (Ellis, p. 203). Nevertheless, in 1992, Pica et al. could not find evidence to support the same conclusion (Ellis, p. 203.) On the other hand, Bacon in 1992 (Ellis, p. 203) found that men use translation as a more significant mode of learning than women who rather tend to address the language directly, by using it.

Both Ellis and Oxford agree that there are gender differences relative to language learning. Ellis claims that (Ellis 1994 p. 204) all the explanations for this phenomenon are taken from the understanding of the general differences between males and females. Maltz and Broker claim that female characteristics lend themselves more to foreign language learning (Ellis,1994 p. 204) since they tend to be more cooperative and "learn to deal sensitively with relationships whereas boys emphasize establishing and maintaining hierarchical relations and asserting their identity" (Ellis, 1994, p.204). Females are also found to use more strategies and to have better listening skills and therefore they benefit more from the language input. In a 1982 study, Ludwig found that male learners were disappointed because of their difficulty in understanding the foreign language, while the females were in general more disappointed because of their inability to speak it.

Ellis and Oxford both admit that there are some unexplained areas in terms of why gender has an impact on foreign language learning. Both agree that more research should be done, and Ellis emphasizes the fact that the gender issue should be examined in relation to other dimensions of language learning such as the conditions of performance. Clearly the results of these studies are inconclusive. The conflicting results indicate that more large scale research needs to be focused on this issue. I question the relevance of this area of research because of the multiplicity of variables.

2.1.9. Personality and Foreign Language Learning

Foreign language teachers, learners, and researchers tend to view personality as one of the key factors that influence the success of foreign language learning. Personality variables such as extroversion and introversion, risk taking, tolerance for ambiguity, empathy, self esteem, and inhibition are among those taken into account in the research. Ellis lists all the main studies conducted in this area. For example, in his examination of risk taking in 1986, Ellis (1994 p. 518) found that high risk-taking learners, characterized by their willingness to use the language at any level of difficulty spontaneously without more preparation, also tend to participate more in classroom activities.

Learners who are characterized by the ability to tolerate ambiguity were studied by Naiman in 1978 and Chapelle and Roberts in 1986 (Ellis, 1994 p. 518); they were found by Naiman to have high scores in listening comprehension, but Chapelle and Roberts did not find a correlation with their proficiency level in the target language. Naiman et al. and Guiora et al. (Ellis, 1994 p. 518) looked at students who had high levels of empathy and reported mixed findings. While Naiman et al. did not find a

correlation between those learners and levels of proficiency, Chapelle and Roberts found such a correlation only in one of several similar studies. Learners with high self-esteem learners investigated both by Heyde in 1979 and Gardener and Lambert in 1972 (Ellis, 1994 p. 518) and despite one's presumption to the contrary, only Heyde found a correlation between high self-esteem and oral proficiency achievements, while Gardner and Lambert found no correlation.

It is believed (Ellis, 1994 p. 518) that inhibited foreign language learners try to protect their egos and build defense mechanisms by avoiding involvement with the target language. Researchers such as Guiroa et al. tested the hypothesis that giving inhibited learners alcohol or Valium would free them from their inhibition. They found that under the influence of alcohol these learners demonstrated better pronunciation ability, but that the Valium had no effect on their language ability.

Ellis (1994, p. 520) believes that the only study of personality that "holds considerable promise" is the study of extroversion/introversion. Its theoretical basis is well established and it is linked to a continuum of other aspects. Extroverts are usually more sociable, communicative, and risk-taking than introverts. Ellis examines two assumptions regarding extroversion and introversion in relation to foreign/second language acquisition. The first is that extroverts have "better interpersonal skills" (Ellis, 1994, p. 520) which Ellis deems "fairly substantial" since this fact is corroborated by many studies. For example, Strong in 1983 demonstrated that out of 12 studies 8 showed that extroverted learners have better communication skills, and 6 showed that extroversion is an advantage for demonstrating the ability to use the language.

On the other hand, the second assumption, that introverts are better at academic skills since they tend to read and write more, was not shown to be as strong. The research in this area failed, according to Ellis (1994, p 202), to support this assumption. Therefore, Ellis suggests that either the research tools be improved or the direction of the investigation altered. Since most studies rely on self-reports and questionnaires, Ellis (1994, p. 202) doubts the value of questionnaires, and suggests that observations would be a more reliable tool for personality measurement.

However, Ellis (1994 p. 203) contends that performance often depends on situational circumstances and there is a need to examine the relationship between aspects of personality and specific learning behaviors. For example, in 1990, Eharman (Ellis, 1994 p. 520) examined the relationship between "personality and the choice of learning strategies" in which she found that "feeling people" use more general study strategies than "thinkers" (Ellis, 1994 p. 543). Other researchers examined the connections between personality and motivation. For example, Gayle (1981) found that learners of French at the University of Ottawa who are field dependent were significantly more motivated to integrate in the new language and its culture. Ely in 1988 examined the relationship between personality and classroom attitude and found that learners with risk-taking personalities have positive attitudes when they need to answer personal questions. They also enjoy open-ended grammar exercises since they relish real challenge. Low risk-taking learners did not feel safe in a controlled environment, and in closed exercises since they were afraid to make mistakes. As expected, learners with high "class sociability" had positive attitudes towards class activities that require sharing information. Ely's

conclusion was that in certain specific situations, personality influences attitude in the classroom setting (Ely, 1988, p. 30).

2.1.10 Social Class and Foreign Language Learning

Ellis claims that there is evidence that there is a relationship between social class and foreign language learning. However, he supports Burstall's (Ellis, 1994, p. 205) belief that this discussion is part of the larger discussion regarding the relationship between social class, learners' achievements and learners' attitudes. He found that lower class learners in general have lower levels of achievement, poor attitude, and a tendency to drop language courses earlier than middle class learners. A similar phenomenon is reported in Israel. Some researchers, Olshtain et al. (Ellis,1994, p. 205), claimed that there is a connection between first language, Cognitive Academic Level Proficiency,(a test that measures cognitive abilities) and the drop-out phenomenon. They claimed that low social class learners scored lower than the middle class learners in their first language, and that Cognitive Academic Level Proficiency can serve as an explanation of this phenomenon.

While other studies support this notion of differences between social class and second language achievements, there are other studies that show no differences at all. For example, in a study done on kindergarten children who participated in a French partial immersion program in Cincinnati (Ellis, 1994, p. 206), no differences in achievement were reported in correlation to social class. All children had similar proficiency levels in listening and oral production. The explanation of this result, according to Ellis, is that the immersion program gives a lot of attention to

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communication skills. Since communication skills are more contextualized learning and less formal, middle class learners were shown to be better learners. Therefore, in immersion programs communication skills are achieved by the same level for all learners regardless of social class (Ellis, 1994, p. 206).

According to Ellis (1994), another argument that can serve as explanation for this phenomenon is the presumed fact that low social class learners have less world experience. By "world experience" he probably means the general knowledge and experience that a child acquires as a result of enriching environment. Many studies that examined this issue pointed out that the differences are influenced by the learners' first language ability. Researchers such as Heath in 1983 and Labov in 1969 show differences in linguistic ability of low social class learners in home environments and school environments. While at home, they were more secure in their linguistic ability; in class, these students showed less confidence and often asked for repetition. It is implied by Ellis (1994, p. 206) that these differences are due to the fact that the low social class learners have less world experience. Ellis mentioned that although this research was conducted on first language ability, it is relevant to second language ability as well.

I concur with the claim that informal settings for foreign /second language learning work equally for learners from all social classes. In fact, in environments in which there is an informal exposure to foreign languages through media or personal contact, members of lower social classes can function very successfully in various foreign languages.

I take issue with the notion implicit in much of the above research that social class equates with poor academic performance, and even innate ability, because this research

influence language learning. When learners of a language have positive ethnic identity towards both their own and the target ethnic group or culture, they will be able to develop positive attitudes towards both languages and become bilingual. However, when learners develop negative views of their own and the target culture, they will become semilingual, becoming only partially proficient in each language. The third level is when strong ethnic identity causes learners to develop a negative attitude towards the target language that interferes with the learning process.

However, Ellis disputes Lambert's "clear cut" distinctions and argues that there are studies that do not demonstrate these correlations. For example, Oller's study (Ellis, 1994, p. 209) demonstrates how Chinese with high achievement in English view Americans as low in happiness and cleverness. Another factor that can also influence learners in terms of ethnic identity is the setting in which the target language is learned. Ellis uses the example of Mexicans who learn Spanish in Mexico, and who feel more secure about their ethnicity as compared to Mexicans who study English as immigrants in California. Such feelings influence attitudes and success in the learning process.

The third perspective on the relationship between ethnicity and language learning is the "socio-cultural view" which relates to the way in which learners accommodate themselves culturally to speakers of the target language--whether the learners see themselves as part of the ethnic group or see themselves as separate from it. If they are group centered, they will separate themselves from the target language of the other group out of group loyalty. But the same learners as individuals they might be more connected to the target language group and be willing to adopt the language and the culture of the new society.

2.1.12. The Good Foreign Language Learner

The study of "good language learners" is an example of research that tries to investigate many aspects that relate to the language learner, such as cognitive factors, intelligence, aptitude to language learning, personality, motivation, and learning strategies. The basic assumption that underlies this research is the belief that good language learners possess all the "right ingredients" which indicate the optimal conditions for success in language learning. According to Ellis, although all of the above-mentioned aspects have been researched, most of the research concentrates on identifying the good language learners' learning strategies. That research identifies five major characteristics of the good foreign language learner, which are:

(A) Learners' concern for the language form. Ellis (1994, p. 546) reports on studies by Rubin in 1975 and Naiman et al in 1978 which found that good learners are attentive to forms and tend to analyze them and compare them to their native tongue. They also use reference books to monitor their knowledge of the forms and tend to learn from their errors. There is a claim by a few researchers such as Reiss (Ellis, 1994 p.546) that the attention to forms is more important to them than attention to meaning, although most studies show that attending to both meaning and form were part of the good language learner's strategy.

(B) The ability to focus on using the language by employing communication strategies. Studies by Abraham and Vann in 1987 show evidence of good learners' efforts to "engage in real communication" (Ellis, 1994, p. 549).

(C) The tendency to be active in the learning process. According to Pickett (Ellis, 1994, p. 549), these learners do not rely totally on their teachers, but rather see them as facilitators and look for other sources for learning. Being an active learner could also include silent learning and does not necessarily mean active oral participation.

(D) The tendency to be aware of the learning process. They can describe it and make decisions accordingly. For example, in a 1983 study, Reiss (Ellis, 1994, p. 549) reported on "A" students who were very detailed and specific when they were asked to describe the way they achieved their grades. Ellis quotes an "A" student in this report who was able to tell the interviewer that while studying a new verb tense, he repeated it out loud and also looked for connections in similar patterns, while a "B" student was more general in his description, merely saying that he went over the material in order to learn the new tense.

(E) Flexibility in choice of learning strategy. According to Ellis, Chamot et al. (Ellis, p. 550) conducted one of the most comprehensive studies of good language learners which illustrates clearly the importance of flexibility. Good learners tend to choose their strategy according to the tasks and the situation. By doing so, they demonstrate a great deal of flexibility as well as efficiency.

Ellis (1994, p. 550) summarizes the research on good learners by saying that the metacognitive abilities of these students give them not only an advantage in language acquisition, but also in the ability to report about their learning processes, and thus they are valuable resources to researchers attempting to gain insight into their ways of processing the new language. It is clear that the research in this area is mainly concentrated on classroom settings only.

2.1.13 Learners' Beliefs about Second Language Learning

According to Ellis (1994, p. 477), relatively few studies have examined the issue of learners' beliefs regarding language learning. Like other researchers, he believes that when learners approach the learning of a new language, they form theories regarding different aspects of the learning. For example, he reports on Wenden (Ellis, 1994, p. 477) who researched the beliefs of advanced language learners in three aspects of their learning. The first aspect regarded language use during the learning process. The second aspect was about the explicit elements of the language such as grammar and the ways to achieve accuracy in it. The third aspect was exploring the different feelings that the learners employed during the learning process, including feeling towards the language, the environment, their abilities, and so on. According to Ellis, Wenden concluded that although all learners had different and varied beliefs, the fact was, with one exception, that all of them had a set of beliefs.

Horowitz, in the early 1980s (Kuntz , 1996) developed an instrument to study the beliefs of language learners. This instrument, " The Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory " (BALLI), was mainly used on learners and teachers of commonly taught languages. Today, there are several BALLI's that relate to specific languages and learners, such as foreign learners of ESL or non-native teachers of English in foreign countries, and so on. This instrument has been in use for more than a decade, and it contains the following themes: difficulty in language learning, foreign language aptitude, nature of language learning, learning strategies, motivation, and expectations. In her studies, Horowitz insisted on testing first year or first semester students since she claimed

that after a short period of learning in the new place, the learners' might change their beliefs. Kuntz (1996, pp 9) criticizes these themes because the themes did not originate from the learners, but rather represent the teachers' notions of what areas of beliefs students must hold.

According to Kuntz (1996, pp. 8-9) there are some general findings from Horowitz's studies. In terms of learning strategies, she found that the learners believed that it is important to repeat and practice all the time during the learning process, as well as to try to express themselves in the language even if they do not do it correctly. In terms of the difficulty of language learning, most learners believed that there are languages that are more difficult than others, and it can take a learner between 2 and 5 years in order to become proficient in the language. In terms of language aptitude, they believed that everyone can learn a language, although children will always learn it better. Regarding the learning environment, the learners believed that it is better to learn a language in the country where the target language is in use. They also thought that there is no need to translate in order to acquire the new language and in general they view language learning as different from other subjects taught in school. Kuntz summarizes all the studies that used the Horowitz model. For example, Smith and Nummikoski in 1989 (Kuntz, 1996, p.10) conducted a study among learners of a less commonly taught language, Russian, and they found that these learners believe that while everyone can learn a language, those who are good in math can learn it better (Kuntz ,1996, p.10). Unlike Horowitz, who recommended surveying students' beliefs before starting their program, Bacon and Finnemann conducted a study in1990 on learners in their third semester of foreign language study at the university and found that they still held some of the beliefs that

Horowitz reported regarding the first semester learners, including the belief that learning a language is mainly memorizing. Cambell and Ortiz (Kuntz, 19960) conducted a study among learners in the U.S. Air Force Academy using the Horowitz instrument with some modification. In general their results supported Horowitz's results with slight changes. Most their learners did not view grammar as the main part of language learning, and, in addition, they reported different views regarding learning strategies. Thomsky, (Kuntz, 1996), who compared beliefs of two cultural groups, came to the conclusion that there were differences in belief regarding their motivation and learning strategies, but, according to her, it is due to their cultural differences. A study done by Yang in 1992 (Kuntz, 1996, p.17) also reinforces the effect of culture on beliefs. Yang translated the BALLI into Chinese and gave it to Taiwanese learners of English. She found that the learners who majored in language expressed a more positive attitude than other learners. Her study also indicated that " students' expectations about learning English was significantly associated with their use of a variety of learning strategies" (Kuntz , 1996, p.17). Other studies that are based on the Horowitz model include the Fox study in 1993 (Kuntz 1996, pp. 18) on teacher assistants at SUNY, and Kern in 1994 at the University of California on beliefs regarding language learning. An interesting modified use of this model was Mantle-Bromley's in 1995 in which she investigated the beliefs of foreign language learners in middle school and again found their beliefs to be similar to those of the adult learners. According to Kuntz, the contribution of Horowitz's model is the fact that it allows researchers to analyze learners' beliefs systematically and to appreciate the immense impact that these beliefs have on the learning processes as well as on the curriculum.

Ellis (1994, pp. 447-449) points out that none of the above-mentioned studies try to correlate the learners' beliefs with success in language learning. He mentions Abraham and Vann's study in 1987 which suggests connections between beliefs and outcomes. In their case study of two learners, they found that one learner did better on the speaking test, and they explained this by the fact that he had different beliefs on learning communication strategy.

Ellis (1996, p. 447- 449) also raises the issue of the factors that influence the language learners' beliefs. He describes Little, Singleton, and Silivus' study in 1984 (Ellis, 1994, pp. 478-479) as an example of a study that tries to respond to this issue. In their study, they found that past experience in education in general, and in learning a foreign language in particular, is a crucial factor in determining the learners' beliefs as well as their personalities and cognitive styles. Ellis also believes that learning about learners' beliefs, especially in relation to their success in the language, can contribute to the design of the curriculum and teaching methods; therefore, they should be investigated in greater depth.

2.1.14. Disability in Learning Foreign Language

Foreign language professionals are familiar with the phenomenon of students with strong academic backgrounds who nevertheless tend to fail language courses, even with the support of a tutor, and the high percentage of drop outs of such learners from language programs. This phenomenon is believed to be a result of a specific disability in learning a foreign language. Gajar (1987) describes a study done by Dinklage, a clinical psychologist from Harvard University, who identified two types of foreign language

learning disability. The first is connected to those who exhibit a specific language disability [in foreign languages] such as reading and spelling skills, reversals, left-right confusion," (Gajar, 1987, p. 327). The other type is connected to those who have poor auditory skills and cannot discriminate sounds in foreign language. Dinklage, along with many others, recommends exempting these foreign language disabled learners at the post-secondary levels from foreign language requirements.

In Kenney and Smith's 1989 survey (Gajar, 1987, p. 327), they found that 32 out of 54 institutions of higher education allow foreign language disabled learners to drop the foreign language requirements or to take substitute courses in intercultural areas.

The two main issues that occupy the literature regarding this phenomenon are how to diagnose foreign language disabled learners, and how to teach a language to those disabled learners who really want to study it. In terms of the first issue, the diagnostic method Gajar suggests is to use the sub-tests developed through the MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test). According to her, since these subtests measure the abilities to remember, listen, discriminate and associate sound and symbols, and identify grammar structures, they can help diagnose foreign language learning difficulties. Gajar reports on employing these tools successfully with learners of French, German, and Spanish at Pennsylvania State University.

Many parts of the literature in this area also offer solutions to those who are challenged by this phenomenon. We find advice to the teachers and the learners on how to process a new language. New methods are being developed; for example, Helmes (MacLagan, pp.10-11) suggests attacking each problem separately. If the learner suffers from auditory problems, s/he should listen to the same sounds for longer periods of time.

For others who have visual problems, the letters and the pictures need to be sharpened, and so on. Barnett (Barnett, & Webb, 1985, p.9) claims that when it comes to reading, these students need to be guided specifically on how to fulfill the tasks. Schneider (1996) suggests phonological and orthographic training as well as grammar training. Although I believe that in many cases foreign language disabled learners should be relieved of foreign language requirements in post-secondary education, this issue is still relevant since many such learners will continue to be interested in acquiring a foreign language, especially in pursuit of their own heritage language or cultural roots.

Summary

While reviewing the research regarding the learners of foreign/second languages it was clear to me that the main characteristic of this research is its fragmentation. By that I mean that in most cases the learners were examined mainly through only one aspect, and rarely through small groups of aspects that relate to each other. I also question the research because it addresses learners without giving sufficient weight to the context in which they are learning.

As I explained earlier, the researchers' goal in most cases is to understand the learners, as part of research efforts to identify success in the learning process. In my opinion, such an approach that concentrates on isolated aspects interferes with their goal. I agree with these researchers that these many aspects form an important part of the variables that influence the learners. At the same time, I also believe that this examination of isolated aspects, separate from the learning conditions, misses the purpose regardless

of the context. I agree with the assumption that all learners are similar in the sense that they are all going through a similar process, but I also think that this is not enough to justify research that treats all learners as the same. In my opinion, one can search for similarities only in groups of learners that share the same learning conditions, i.e. the learning environment. This environment includes the target language that is being learned, the institutional framework, the learning and the teaching goals, as well as the current level, and the nature of the learners. In other words, learners can be understood only if they are examined holistically in a contexualized framework. Therefore, in my research in which I wish to understand the characteristics of the advanced learners who study difficult foreign languages in higher education, I am clearly searching for understanding learners who, although personally diverse, belong to a particular group that shares similar learning conditions.

2.2. The Foreign Language Learners and the Advanced Level.

The purpose of this section is to review the research in the field of foreign language learning and teaching regarding learners who study a foreign language at the advanced level. This research concentrates on two main areas. The dominant portion of this research studies the language characteristics that advanced learners produce. The other portion of this research concentrates on understanding aspects of the advanced learners as language learners, especially their learning strategies. The research I shall review defines "advanced learners" in many different ways. Since each definition reflects the particular analytical perspective of each researcher, it is worthwhile to summarize them.

2.2.1 Summary of definitions of advanced level/learners.

Researchers vary in the ways they assess the level of language learning of those whom they term "advanced learners." For example, Breiner-Sanders (1990) discusses learners in the upper level courses in a typical post-secondary language program using the ACTFL guidelines (see Appendix) as the point of reference to define the advanced level. Breiner-Sanders claims that, in general, the upper level learners " fall within the Intermediate and Advanced range of the proficiency scale with respect to their productive skills" (1990, p. 68). At the same time, she argues that although these learners fall within the above range, the fact is that at this level students vary in their characteristics. She claims that there are eight prototypes of learners at this level (to be discussed later in this essay.) Liskin-Gasparro (Foreign Language Annals, 1996) also uses the ACTFL guidelines as the measurement tool to describe learners' language abilities. Since she claims that the ACTFL guidelines are not well supported by empirical studies to prove the validity of the advanced-level definitions, she tries to help validate them by conducting more empirical studies to support them.

Other researchers define the advanced level by the number of years that the learners studied the target language prior to reaching this level. Ridley (1991) defines these learners as "the end of a two-year course" (1991, p. 4) and Vincent (1990) defines the advanced student as one who "had entered a five-year degree course leading to an MA" (p. 272). Hulstijn, Hollander, and Greidauns describe the advanced learners in their study as learners who had studied "French for 6 years in high school and almost one year at the university" (p. 329). The exact number of years used as criteria to define the

advanced level varies, not only among researchers, but sometimes one researcher shifts position on the question. For example, in one study, Lennon (1991) studied the language achievement of "advanced" German students who had studied English for 6 years in high school, and in an another study he (1990) defined the category of advanced learners as those who had studied the target language between 7-14 years. In a third study, he refers to the advanced students as learners with an average of ten year's experience in the target language. (Lennon 1989)

Still other researchers judge the level of the learners simply by the title of the current course in which they are enrolled. For example, McGroarty (1989) views courses that are numbered level 5 and level 6 as appropriate for advanced students, and Allar (1985) sees learners who enroll in courses at the "upper level division" (p. 145) as advanced.

A few researchers describe their advanced level participants as people who have a significant background and knowledge in the target language. Robinson (1981) distinguishes the advanced learner from the beginner learner by noticing that "the advanced learner has already quite a considerable knowledge of L2" (1981, p.102) and Bushell (1995) adds that advanced learners have a "clear track-record of achievements in their chosen language" (1995 p. 38).

Other researchers, such as Towell, Hawkins, and Bazergui (1996) and (1993), use the word "advanced" with no explanation, leaving it to readers to interpret its meaning on their own.

Krashen and Parr(1986) take into account the academic background of their advanced learners as well as their current relation to the target language in defining their

level. Their advanced subjects were non-native speakers of the target language who had studied the language as adults, and were "...advanced graduate students or faculty in foreign language education who are currently teaching the second language at the high school or college level" (1986, p. 276).

Formal degrees or tests are also used as criteria to define advanced learners. Laufer (1991) mentioned that the subjects in her study were all graduates of Israeli high school; therefore, their level of English was "similar to that required of the Cambridge First Certificate of English" (pp. 441-443). Bardovi-Harling and Bofman (1989) claimed that their learners were advanced since they scored approximately 550 in the TOEFL, while Hee-Won (1993) believed that learners who score 577-603 in the TOFEL could be considered advanced. For Swain and Roberge (1992), Advanced Placement tests at the university level also served as criteria for defining the advanced level. For Ruin (1996), a "minimum grade of 3 out of 5" in a language course at the end of high school serves as definition for advanced learners. [Equal to grade B]

While it is clear from the above summary that the term "advanced learner" has many definitions, all of them focus on one central two-pronged phenomenon: on the one hand, advanced learners have substantial backgrounds in the target language that allow them to use it in various frameworks; on the other hand, advanced learners are characterized as still lacking many crucial elements of the target language and thus are still in the process of learning. In the next section, we shall consider the characteristics of the advanced learners' language production as seen by the researchers.

2.2.2 Advanced learners' language development and language production

As mentioned earlier, various researchers examine different linguistic aspects of the language that advanced learners produce.

Error in language production is one area that has been studied. In a 1991 study, Lennon examined the language errors in oral production of four German subjects who were advanced learners of English, and spent six months living in England and using English, the target language. He found that these learners still frequently produced errors, despite their many years of prior classroom learning and intensive exposure to the target language in a country where it is in use. The learners' main errors were "with lexis and preposition choice"(Lennon , 1991, p. 43). In an article (1996) Lennon describes one particular instance of the above learners "lexical errors", i.e., errors in verb choice, which, according to him, make up 13% of their total errors. He argues that the advanced learners, although they had an extensive knowledge of the verb meaning, tended to rely too much on their understanding of the core meaning of the verb and were not context-specific. He uses as an example misunderstanding of the difference between the verbs "cry" and "shout" or "fetch" and "take" (Lennon , 1996, p. 26). Lennon's conclusion is that the advanced learners "require detailed classroom vocabulary work on simple high frequency verbs, which explore meaning range and limitations..."(1996, p.35). Lennon notes that while three of his subjects reduced the level of their errors towards the end of their stay, the fourth, who had the most errors compared to the others, did not reduce them at all. According to Lennon, this phenomenon might suggest that errors are subject to correction depending on their number.

The difficulties of advanced foreign language learners with polysemous words (words that have different meanings) is also discussed by Hee-Won. In a 1993 study, Hee-won found that the use of polysemous words prevented adult learners of English as a Second Language at the university of Texas at Austin from understanding a written text. He claims that his subjects could not rely on clues in order "to disambiguate between different meanings of a particular word." (1993, p.11). Hee-Won claims that this phenomenon that is well known among young native readers can be also be related to non-native intelligent advanced readers.

Bardovi-Harlig and Bofman(1989) investigated the attainment of syntactic and morphological accuracy of advanced language learners by examining their written language production. Their data reveal that the advanced subjects demonstrated "relatively strong syntax but incomplete and variable acquisition of grammatical morphemes"(1989 p. 25). It is interesting to note that in terms of the findings regarding the errors in the verbal morphology , the greater numbers of errors were tense switching and verb meaning. This is a result that reminds one of the Lennon study regarding verb choice. Bardovi-Harlig and Bofman's (1989) explanation of this phenomenon is that grammatical morphemes, such as verb tense, are fragile features of language in general, both in first and second language, and the research shows that these features are learned late in the process of language acquisition. However, syntax, the word order of the sentence, is a more resilient component of the language and therefore is learned more quickly and better (Bardovi-Harlig and Bofman, 1989, pp. 28-29). Bardovi-Harlig and Bofman (1989) speculate that, since the level of sensitivity for fragile elements in the language is higher, learners receive more, but different, types of input and from different

resources (teachers, native speakers, etc.), and therefore it is may be difficult for them to establish and learn the correct forms.

In another study, Krashen and Pon (1975) found a gap in the ability of their subject, an advanced ESL adult learner, to produce an accurate sample of speech and her knowledge of the language rules. While listening to her own speaking sample, she was able to correct almost all her speaking mistakes (around 95%). The researchers note that the subject's speaking errors mainly concerned simple structures of the language, such as third person endings, irregular past tense forms, and so on. They conclude that the subject did not have sufficient time to use her "conscious linguistic knowledge of English in a casual speech" (p. 3). A written sample produced by the same subject was indeed free from the same errors that were found in her speech sample. Krashen and Pon conclude that in order to use the conscious knowledge of the second language as a monitor, advanced learners of second language need time to process it.

In terms of error correction, Carrol, Swain and Roberge (1992) posed a question regarding the role of feedback in error correction among advanced and intermediate foreign language learners. In their study, they found that, in general, extensive explicit feedback improved the learners' language production. They also noted that the feedback was more effective with the advanced learners since they scored better to start with. In addition, they observed that the advanced group better retained what they had learned. Carrol, Swain and Roberge argue that the advanced learners' success is due to their "increased ability and flexibility in processing, storing, and recalling the information." (1992, p.186). They also conclude that both groups improved their ability to construct morphological generalization as a result of extensive explicit feedback correction.

In trying to understand the inability of advanced learners who are well-motivated to produce accurate grammar utterances while using the language, Ruin (1996), like other researchers, examines second language theories in order to find an explanation of this phenomenon. However, unlike other researchers, he concludes that there is nothing in second language acquisition theory that can serve as an explanation. Therefore, he suggests looking for answers in a different direction, i.e., by examining the teaching aspects of the language and not the learning aspects. Ruin concludes from his 1996 study that the profession of teaching is failing to teach the grammatical aspects of language in appropriate ways. Ruin claims that traditional methods fail to meet the needs of the learners and that more communicative methods of teaching should be developed.

While Ruin (1996) concludes that second language theories cannot supply a satisfactory explanation of the grammatical inaccuracy phenomenon among advanced foreign language learners, they make use of language acquisition theory for their purpose. They claim that "procedural knowledge is the most important factor to the development of fluency in advanced second language learners" (1996, p. 84). They refer to Levelt's theory (Towell, Hawkins and Bazergui, 1996, p. 85) which argues that procedural knowledge, i.e., knowledge of how to process information, is required in order to produce fluent speech. Levelt believes that there are three stages of language development, each of which possesses a type of procedural knowledge. The first stage, conceptualization, concerns what language to use and in what situation. The second stage entails formulation, acquiring the means of expression, such as grammatical forms. The third stage, articulation, concerns how to translate content into a phonetic plan and to articulate it. Towell, Hawkins and Bazergui use this theory to explain the improvement of their

advanced learners/subjects who spent time in residence in a francophone community. They claim that, since the improvement of the speech fluency of their learners is expressed in their ability to increase the length and complexity of their linguistic units, the element that is responsible for this improvement is the proceduralization of the formulator. As a result, Towell, Hawkins and Bazergui also assume that when learners reach a "plateau" in their language development, it means that their "development of proceduralization in the formulator is still in progress" (1996, p.113).

Towell, Hawkins and Bazergui (1993) argue that advanced learners are going through a developmental process, even though they have relatively strong backgrounds in the target language. In their 1993 study, they demonstrate that, although advanced learners' language production may seem nonsystematic because of its variability, it has a systematic development. In this study, they followed the process by which advanced learners made use of two similar articles in French. They found that there are several stages that their learners went through while learning and establishing the correct use of these articles. They posit that these stages can be explained within the framework of the diffusion model introduced by Gatbonton in 1978 (Towell, Hawkins and Bazergui, 1993, p. 441). While Gatbonton claimed that nonsystematic variability is a necessary process in phonetic development, he identified two stages in this process. The first one is the acquisition phase in which learners acquire the different forms and use them freely, and the second stage is the replacement phase in which learners sort the forms and learn to use them correctly. In their own study, Towell, Hawkins and Bazergui found that, in addition to Gatbonton's phases, two more stages can be identified. One stage is prior to the acquisition phase, which they term the nonlinguistic strategy phase in which learners

use the forms without paying attention to their correct usage. The other stage follows the replacement stage and is termed the completion phase, during which learners almost master the correct use of linguistic forms. Towell, Hawkins and Bazergui argue that the existence of these phases supports their claim that advanced learners continue to develop their use of the target language systematically.

Laufer (1991) claims that very few researchers have touched upon the issue of vocabulary development among advanced learners who are competent to function in the target language. In 1991 she studied the rate of vocabulary growth among Israeli university students majoring in English. There was no explicit teaching of vocabulary per se; rather they were exposed to vocabulary through the topics they were studying as part of their program. She found that in general there was no actual growth in the vocabulary of the advanced learners. The only students who did improve were those who fell behind and needed to perform better in order to keep up with their peers. Her conclusion was that vocabulary enrichment at this level requires explicit instruction. Hulstijn, Hollander, and Greidanus also discuss the learning of new vocabulary. In their 1996 study, they examined incidental vocabulary learning through reading by both intermediate and advanced learners. They found that there are two factors that influence the rate of retention of new words: first is the rate of frequency at which a word appears in the text; second is the existence of a marginal glossary that in most cases appeared to be more influential than a regular dictionary. At the same time, the study also demonstrated that those who used the dictionary retained the new words longer. In other words, this study also attempts to convey the idea that an explicit approach to the teaching of new words is the best way for intermediate and advanced learners to enhance their vocabulary.

Krashen and Parr's study (1986) also relates to the advanced learners' language development. This study examined the so-called "din in the head" phenomenon which is an involuntary rehearsal of second languages among learners. In this study, it became clear that while most elementary and intermediate learners experienced this phenomenon, most advanced learners did not. According to them (Krashen, and Parr, 1986) the explanation for the differences between these groups of learners relates to the language acquisition process. According to them, the "din in the head" phenomenon "represents the Language Acquisition Device in action" (1986, p. 276). The fact that most of the advanced learners did not experience this phenomenon supports the notion that they rarely use their Language Acquisition Device (The Language Acquisition Device defined by Chomsky) as the innate ability of human beings to construct and understand the language system (Ommagio, 1993, p. 48). One may assume that most of the advanced learners do not continue to go through the developmental stages in their language learning, probably because their knowledge is already well developed.

In terms of language discourse, the 1996 Liskin-Gasparo study compared the way in which intermediate level students and advanced level students narrate and describe. She found that the main characteristics of advanced learners narration is their growing capacity for integration. When a subject reached the advanced level, the elements of his/her story became more integrated. The description and the narration became one unit. When the subject was an intermediate learner, these two elements were separated. Furthermore, when the subject was an advanced learner, he/she was generally more aware of the audience and therefore tried to engage listeners by creating a context that would grab and hold their attention.

Haskell (1980) summarized the linguistic ability of advanced learners of English as a Second Language. He described the tension between the extensive knowledge of advanced learners in the target language and their abilities to communicate at a high level. They do not have the depth of knowledge that will equip them to engage in high-quality communication.

> Advanced...students generally can communicate well in spoken English. Although they still make mistakes in vocabulary and syntax, these mistakes rarely hinder communication. Reading problems usually center on figurative meanings, idioms, and underlying cultural assumptions.....most of the students can write simple sentences....though they use high frequency English vocabulary correctly ....they sometimes have difficulties with...synonyms. These vocabulary difficulties cause problems for their writing, where a precise word is needed to carry a particular meaning (1980, p. 33).

Along the lines of Haskell, Vincent (1990) emphasized the fact that advanced learners reach a plateau in their writing skills. She described their frustration as originating from the fact that while they can identify their mistakes, they do not know how to correct them. These mistakes mainly concern style and register. Her advanced learners also claimed that their difficulties in engaging with their audience stem from their lack of the techniques for cross-cultural communication.

In the context of the advanced learners' deficiencies, the 1991 Kelly study demonstrated the obstacle that advanced learners face as listeners. He claimed that the main obstacle for these learners is their "lexical ignorance" (Kelly, 1991, p. 135), that is, their difficulty in mastering vocabulary. To "master a word" means to know the word form, how, when and in what frequency it can be incorporated, its relations to other words, and the range of semantic meanings it possesses (Kelly, 1991, p.138). In his

conclusion, Kelly argued that lexical expansion should be a priority in advanced level courses in order to help learners advance their skills in the target language.

In contrast to some of the above-cited studies that generalize about advanced foreign language learners, Breiner-Sanders (1991) claimed that these learners are linguistically heterogeneous. She developed eight profiles that characterize advanced learners:

1. The advanced foreign language student with relatively high fluency and relatively extensive vocabulary, but who lacks the ability to structure the language correctly, which affects his/her speaking and writing. This type of learner usually does not have formal instruction in the target language.
2. The advanced foreign language student who is a "colloquial speaker and writer" (Breiner-Sanders, 1991, p. 70). This learner has studied the language in a natural setting with no instruction and therefore produces mainly informal language.
3. The advanced foreign language learner who uses only the correct form of the language. This learner is very successful in academic measurements of achievement in the language. Usually this learner is not a risk taker.
4. The advanced foreign language learner who is a succinct speaker or writer. S/he has good control of the language as well as good organization, but needs help in order to elaborate more.
5. The advanced foreign language learner who is a generic speaker and writer. S/he has a good command of the language, but does not use the language expressively. S/he mainly uses the most common forms of expression, although correctly.

6. The advanced foreign language learner who is an excellent descriptive storyteller. This learner tends to express everything through stories and description and lacks the ability to summarize or generalize or to express abstract ideas.

7. The advanced foreign language learner who can speak but cannot read or write. This learner has usually studied the language in a natural environment such as home with no, or very little, reinforcement through formal instruction.

8. The advanced foreign language learner who can write but cannot speak, usually due to having acquired the language in an educational environment which did not emphasize oral skills.

2.2.3 The advanced foreign language learner as a language learner and as a language user.

Robinson (1987) viewed advanced learners as more independent than learners at lower levels. Because they have more knowledge of the target language and can perform well, they tend to be "teacher independent" (Robinson, 1987, p. 102). However, at the same time, Robinson also noted that this ability to function well in the language creates a level of satisfaction among such learners that diminishes the efficacy of the traditional classroom setting. Therefore, there is a need to create a different framework for those learners. Robinson believes that self-learning structures would benefit advanced level learners by allowing them to demonstrate and use their independence. In such programs, the role of the teacher would be primarily that of a guide who has the responsibility to expose students to the language and direct their exploration.

In a 1996 study, Liskin-Gasparo compared the language communication strategies of intermediate and advanced learners. She found that the advanced learners rely mostly on language communication strategies, generally circumlocution, in the second language. This strategy is used mainly when the speakers of the target language do not use the precise word, but use the target language to describe the item that is missing from their lexicon. While using this strategy the speakers maintain syntactic control. Other language strategies include: approximation, in which the speaker uses either a similar word or a different form of the word; message reconstruction, in which the speaker expresses him/herself without syntactic control and tries to rephrase the sentence several times; word cognate, in which the speaker makes up words using a word in a target language as a base for their new word; and avoidance strategies, in which the speaker tells his/her audience in the target language that they do not know the word they need to use. What is interesting to note in my opinion is that Liskin-Gasparo's study reinforces the notion that advanced learners have significant control and confidence in their abilities in the target language since they choose to rely on it even in difficult moments.

While Liskin-Gasparo gathered her data from oral interviews with her students, Ridely examined her subjects' oral strategies in real interactions with native speakers. In her 1991 study, she found that her subjects, who had spent six months in the L2 environment, used similar strategies in their interactions with the native speakers. These strategies include paraphrasing, repetition, and message avoidance. The strategies also rely on the subjects' achievements in the second language. She mentioned the fact that one of her subjects who translated from her native language strategies failed to be fluent in her interaction. Ridely also pointed out that while two of her subjects adopted native-

like non-lexical fillers as part of their communication strategies, two others still used their native language non-lexical fillers. Ridely assumes that this phenomenon reflects personality differences, i.e., some learners are more reluctant to give up their native non-lexical features in favor of foreign ones for psychological rather than linguistic reasons.

In his 1989 study, Lennon investigated advanced learners who spent several months in the target language community. He found his learners to have a high level of awareness regarding their abilities and their level of performance, including identifying their mistakes. At the same time, they also developed an ability to "feel" what is wrong and right in the language as well as to identify the gap between the correct form they have learned and the real use in the target language community. Their ability to handle many different situations and contexts made Lennon believe that the advanced learners possess a variety of language styles in the target language, despite their limitations.

In addition, there are a few studies that suggest that the advanced language learner had a higher level of readiness to study. For example, in a 1985 study, Heckler found that advanced learners acquire the passive forms in English better than the intermediate and beginning learners. This suggests that advanced learners can learn the complicated elements of language more easily and efficiently. Yuling (1995) argued that the best stage to focus on the development of learners' socio-cultural education is at the advanced level. Yager (1920) implied that the readiness of the advanced learners makes them aspire to have completely native-like pronunciation.

2.2.4 Reasons for enrolling in advanced foreign language courses .

As mentioned earlier (see above, pp.1-2), the advanced learners in foreign language programs represent a unique group. According to various surveys, only 20-30 % of all language learners continue at the advanced level. The few researchers who address this issue come up with similar explanations. Both Graman (1987) and Dupuy (1994) found that the majority of advanced level students were exposed to the language outside a formal framework, mainly in the country in which the target language is in use. Both researchers believe that the lack of classroom instruction makes these learners more prepared for advanced level courses. Since Dupuy (1994) believes that in natural environments the input that is given to learners is more efficient and significant than classroom instruction, she suggests expanding the amount of natural input in lower level classes. She argues that this will give learners a chance to become better target language users and, as a result, to reach the advanced level. Those who study the target language abroad report that their experience has made them feel more comfortable using that target language. Dupuy also claims that many language teachers who aim to teach the advanced level course at a high level in fact make study abroad a prerequisite to these courses.

Summary

We can conclude from this survey that researchers in this area are mainly interested in the way advanced learners process and develop language, as well as the nature of the outcome, their language production. The consensus is that while learners at this level know the target language, this knowledge is limited. The main criterion by which their knowledge is evaluated is by measuring the distance between advanced

learners' language production and that of native speakers. The fact that advanced learners' knowledge is found to fall behind the natives' abilities supports the researchers' view that the advanced level learners are still in the process of acquiring the target language. This finding raises the question of how language is processed and developed at this level. Most researchers' interest is in identifying how far in the language developmental process these advanced learners have progressed. The researchers who were mentioned in this review have found that advanced learners are somewhere in the middle of the language acquisition process.

This insight that advanced learners are somewhere still in the "middle" of the road on the way to learning the new language is also expressed through the research regarding these learners' strategies of learning. The researchers mentioned in this review distinguish the strategies of advanced learners from learners at other levels by the fact that the former rely on their extensive knowledge in the target language. However, when looking closely at these strategies it is clear that they often aim to "cover" a lack of knowledge and abilities when asked to interact in the target language.

What is largely neglected in the advanced learner research is the fact that the advanced learners represent a special group of learners. Therefore, the questions that need to be addressed as a result of this fact, relate to the reasons these learners chose to continue. Graham and Dupuy try to address such questions by saying that outside experience in the language is responsible for this continuation. I believe that by trying to understand them more holistically, we can gain a more comprehensive picture of whom these students are, not only in terms of their linguistic abilities, but also as learners, persons, and members of the second language learning community.

Chapter 3

3 Methodology

In this chapter I shall describe two phases of my study. In the first phase I will describe two pilot studies I conducted on learners who enrolled in the advanced foreign language courses at Brandeis University and served as an inspiration for my current study. While the first study concentrated on learners of Hebrew, Japanese, and Chinese, which are considered "difficult" languages for American learners whose native language is English, the second study also included learners of Spanish and French, widely considered "easy" languages for these learners. While the first pilot study was qualitative in its nature, the second study was based on both quantitative and qualitative methods. Both studies led me to the design of my current research.

In the second part of this chapter, I will describe the current research.

3.1 Two Pilot Studies

3.1.1. Pilot Study #1

As the first step towards understanding the characteristics of foreign language learners who enrolled in advanced level foreign language courses in college, I conducted a preliminary study among a small group of learners.

The learners I chose to investigate are students from the Hebrew and Oriental Language Programs at Brandeis University. Brandeis University is "a private, coeducational, and nonsectarian institution of higher learning and research" (*Brandeis*

University Bulletin, 1996-1997 PP. 2) offering both graduate and undergraduate degrees. There are approximately 3,800 students enrolled at the university, 2900 of them undergraduates. The undergraduate curriculum is strictly liberal arts based. Although founded in 1948 by the Jewish community, "It is not affiliated with any religious organization, it offers no theological instruction, and it welcomes students and faculty of all background and beliefs" (*Brandeis University Bulletin,* 1996-1997, p. 2). According to a statement in the Brandeis *Bulletin,* the foreign language requirement

> reflects a belief in the importance of understanding language-our own and the language of others--as central to society and culture. The goal of the foreign language requirement, therefore, is to prepare students to understand better and to participate in a foreign culture by developing basic skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in another language"(*Brandeis University Bulletin*,1996-1997, PP. 23).

It is interesting to note that although the University's stated goal is to enable its learners not only to understand foreign cultures but also to participate in them, it requires them to attain only intermediate level skills, since they need to complete only the first three semesters of any foreign language offered. As discussed earlier, successful completion of three courses will produce students who have limited ability to function in a particular language.

The languages that are offered in this program--Hebrew, Japanese, and Chinese--are considered among the less commonly taught, as well as difficult languages to acquire. A study by the Foreign Service Institute (Omaggio, 1993, pp. 27-28) posited that the foreign languages learned in the United States may be divided into four groups according to their level of difficulty, as determined by the numbers of hours it takes the

motivated American whose native language is English to achieve competence in the language. Among the "easy" languages are Spanish, French, Hebrew, and Japanese, while Chinese is considered among the most difficult languages. For this study, I interviewed six students from the program, two from each language. These interviews were taped and I conducted a follow-up conversation over the phone with a few of them. Three female and three male students participated, among whom two are international students. The table below specifies more details about the participants (in order to protect their privacy I used only their first names).

Table 1. Participants profile

Name	*Gender*	*Nationality*	*Year at Brandeis*	*Target Language*	*Year at the Program*
David	**male**	**American**	**Third**	**Chinese**	**second**
Tricia	**female**	**American**	**Fourth**	**Chinese**	**third**
Duak	**male**	**Thai**	**Third**	**Japanese**	**third**
Titiana	**female**	**Malaysian**	**Third**	**Japanese**	**third**
Moshe	**male**	**American**	**Second**	**Hebrew**	**second**
Lisa	**female**	**American**	**First**	**Hebrew**	**first**

Since the purpose of the study was to find the characteristics of these students at two levels, as individuals and as learners, all the interviews included the following topics:

(a) The interviewee's description of him/herself in the past and in the present, including family background and various experiences in their life;

(b) The interviewee's description of him/herself as a learner in general in the past and in the present, including details of various learning experiences

(c) The interviewee's description of him/herself as a language learner in the present and in the past, including details on their current experience, such as: why they choose to study this specific language, how they feel about this particular experience, and their future plans to use the language.

In terms of their personal characteristics the interviewees shared the following: ***Unique individuals in their environment***: It seems that all of them at some point met a person whom they admired, and directly or indirectly influenced them. This person either holds a unique job, a distinct set of values, or went through a process of growth and changes in his/her life that set him/her apart. For example: David related his admiration of his cousin who grew up in a broken family, and was always "a trouble maker" and went on to become a successful and respected pediatrician. David not only admired the achievements of his cousin, but also his personality, the fact that he does not have any "inhibitions."

Tricia really admired her mother who as an adult had to start a second career. She was a clerk who got fired and needed to go back to nursing, a profession she had trained for, but never practiced. Her mother has also encouraged her to be independent and to open her mind to the world by giving her the opportunity to travel to China when she was

only sixteen. It seems that the fact that her parents never forced her to go to church, but let her choose, shaped her liberal ideas.

For Moshe, his father is "a good example". His father is a rabbi who discovered Judaism late in life, and started to learn Hebrew when Moshe was a baby, and always insisted on speaking Hebrew with him. Moshe was also influenced by his grandfather, who advised him about how to live the life of a respected Jew.

Duak, admires his parents who made an important decision regarding their career. His father is an economist who decided to step into his own father's job as the secretary to the Thai king's mother, while Duak's mother became her lady-in-waiting. Although it meant that Duak and his brother lived with their grandmother, he understood the big opportunity that his father had and respected it a lot, "It was a once in a life time thing, because nobody gets to do this kind of job. My father had to work very hard every single day; he had no holidays, and he could not make mistakes." After the death of the King's mother, Duak's father decided to dedicate himself to the well-being of the poor Thai people, and created a non-profit organization to that end. Duak hopes to work with him when he returns to Thailand. He also recognizes how in a society that is very corrupt, his father is an honest man who will not disobey the law.

Titiana also comes from a unique environment. Her mother is British and her father is a Malaysian who does not hesitate to move from one place to another so his family can get to know many places.

Lisa admires her parents for deciding to take Hebrew late in her life so they can keep up with their children.

As we can see, all the interviewees recognized a person that is unique to them and probably served as a model to them.

The interviewees are unique in their environment: All participants feel that they are considered by others to be unique or different. Their uniqueness is expressed either by the fact that they follow their heart, or act according to a set of values that they deliberately adopted. Some of them are different because of their national or ethnic origins.

For example, Duake is the only Thai student at Brandeis, and Titiana feels that she has a unique culture since she is mixing all the cultures she has lived in. She claims that it makes her open to all cultures: "I mix things together; I do not have a set culture." This is unlike many of the people in her environment who became chauvinistically devoted to their own culture and therefore think of themselves as superior to others. She also feels that she is unique since she does not have a real nationality. Although she has a British passport, she has lived most of her life in Japan, yet she doesn't feel Japanese, since she does not know the language well enough. She says that although she "feels different, she fits in everywhere," therefore she does not mind her uniqueness.

Tricia testified that in her hometown she was known as very independent with strong ideas about her academic career. In high school she decided not to study science since it conflicted with her language courses, and since she loved languages she decided to pursue them. She also did not follow the advice of her high school advisor who suggested that she go to a woman's college, since it contradicted her liberal beliefs. She believed that an all women's school is anti-male and she did not want to be part of it. She recognizes the fact that her background is different from most Brandeis students since she

is a devoted Christian who comes from a rural area in upstate New York. She admitted that in her first years people wondered why she came here, but although she feels that she is still different, she is respected now: "It was difficult in the freshman year, but now I feel that to be different is good here [at Brandeis]."Her decision to get engaged has shocked her parents, but since she believes in relationships with commitment, she will follow her heart and will marry her fiancé after his graduation.

Lisa also feels different since, unlike her other classmates in high school, she was a serious learner who really loved learning: "I guess I am different ....I can take things seriously; for example, in high school I really enjoyed learning, and other people did nor care." David, on the other hand, was never part of a group; he claimed that although he had friends he never followed them but needed to be "dragged" to their activities. Moshe admitted to being a person who stands out in his community. As the son of a rabbi, everybody looked at him to see how he was behaving: "I used to be under a microscope; everything I did everybody talked about it."

As we can see, all the above interviewees see themselves as different in their environments due to their personality or to their special position or even their unique beliefs.

The range of their explanations at to why they chose to study the target language clearly demonstrates how they hope to achieve goals that will satisfy their personal needs. For example, the reason Duak started learning Japanese is because of his desire "To read Japanese comics in Japanese." As a child in Thailand he used to read Japanese comics in translation and he felt that in order to understand them better he needs to the language: "I figured that if I read it in Japanese it is going to be funnier." Now that he also has many

Japanese friends he finds that he can get closer to them by knowing the language: "when I am with them sometimes they speak Japanese and it is nice that I can pick up what they are saying." Titiana is also taking Japanese since she "has Japanese friends to speak with."

Others are attracted to the uniqueness and the difference of the other culture, and language is a way to satisfy their curiosity regarding these cultures. David studied many languages but Chinese "is so different " that he decided to try it. Although for Tricia the decision to study Chinese was "completely random," since "I had an extra time and I wanted to take another language," and she was looking for "something different." David sees foreign language not only as different but as mystical: "I thought that there is a sort of mysticism about things that are foreign."

The two Hebrew learners regarded the language as a component that is part of their identity as Jews. Although the decision to start learning the language was made for them, since they were sent by their parents at a young age to study the language, they affirmed the decision and decided to continue learning since they both believe that Hebrew is part of who they are as Jews. Moshe believes that "Hebrew is as much part of me as English" and it is "so basic to me" therefore he cannot stop learning it, and Lisa explains that since she was "exposed to it [Hebrew] all her life" she does not "want to give it up." While Moshe sees Hebrew as "essential for every Jew," she believes "that it helps to know Hebrew as a Jew since it gives you access to Jewish resources."

All the interviewees perform well in school: Most of the participants claimed that they are good students. A few had undergone crises, like Duak and David, but they stated that it was temporary. David became lazy and did not do his homework, and Duak cut

school a few times. Some, like Tricia and Lisa, took higher level classes in their high school.

Most of them tend to participate in extra curricular activities; in the past and the present. Moshe was a national leader in a religious movement, played basketball, and volunteered to help Russian immigrants. Lisa wrote in the newspaper in high school and now at the university, she plays sports; while in high school, she was on the Judaic action committee. At Brandeis she is in a "Buddy Study Program," where each week she studies Tora [the Old Testament] with a friend. Tricia is organizing religious and social activities at the church at Brandeis, and Titiana is singing in the church choir. David says that the only extra curricular activity he has is playing music for himself.

Most of them also have work experience: Moshe tutors Hebrew, and works as a Mashgiach (inspector) of "kashrut" (Kosher food) at the university. Tricia works in the Chemistry Department. In her hometown she used to baby-sit and worked as a maid in a hotel. Lisa used to work during summers in a restaurant and in a real estate company, and David played music in nursing homes.

They have faced major challenges. Duak left his family to go to boarding school in the States without knowing English. Titiana came alone from Japan after spending one year at a community college in England. David decided to drop his first concentration at a late stage and make an effort to advance quickly in Chinese by attending summer school and traveling to China, as well as by taking an additional course at Wellesley College. He also started to study Japanese at the same time, knowing how difficult it is to study both languages simultaneously. Lisa is publishing a book about taking the SAT and promoting it all over the country, and Tricia traveled twice to China, the first time at a very young

age. Moshe initiated a Shabat dinner at his dorm with the Provost and the President of the University in order to show them the Jewish life on campus.

All of them have visited the country whose language they are learning. Tricia visited China twice and Duak went to Japan on vacation. David studied in a Princeton summer program in China, and Lisa and Moshe visited Israel several times. Titiana had the opportunity to live in France, Norway, and Britain, and for many years in Japan.

From the description of the interviewees' personal characteristics, it can be concluded that a learner in advanced courses of less commonly taught languages at Brandeis is a person who tends to follow his/her heart and is not afraid of challenges, is very active as a student and as a person, and is independent as well as individually unique. This person has an open mind and usually holds a set of values that guide him/her in his/her life. It is clear that in order to conclude whether these common aspects indeed characterize the majority of these learners, a larger research on a wider scale is necessary. It will be interesting to see how the personal characteristics of the interviewees relate to their characteristics as learners.

From the information I gathered about the interviewees' characteristics as learners, I found that indeed many of them have similar characteristics.

Learning the language for self- enrichment: It seems that most of them approach language learning from a personal perspective. For some it satisfies their emotional needs; others feel that it complements their ideology. We can find this approach in different aspects of the interviews; for example, when they were asked why they chose to study this specific language, their explanations clearly indicated how they wanted to achieve personal goals. For example, many mentioned the fact that learning the language

makes them happy: Titian said, "I enjoy Japanese" and that is the reason she is learning it. David confessed that he is learning the language "because it is so much fun," and Tricia admitted that learning Chinese "is like a hobby," and therefore "I prefer doing my Chinese homework first." For some the fun is the fact that they are learning in a unique environment; they like the small class size and the supportive attitude of the teacher. Lisa likes her Hebrew class because her classmates "are fun people to be with" and Tricia enjoys her "wonderful relations with other students." Duak declares that even though he is an economics major, Japanese is his favorite class not only because of the fact that the class is small, but also because "the teacher surely pays attention to each student." He also "comes to class because of his classmates." They are "all friends" and after class they "go for pizza together."

Others enjoy the challenges in learning a difficult language. Lisa feels good that after so many years of Hebrew at Jewish day school, at Brandeis she still feels challenged; "I like Hebrew because it is a challenge. I did not learn much after seventh grade, but I am learning now." David loves to write in Chinese because he feels good about the challenge: "I love writing, which I used not to like," but now that he has improved his ability he writes "all day." David emphasizes how he does not continue to learn a language if it is too easy. Therefore he did not continue with Russian or French because they did not seem either different or difficult enough.

Future Use. The fact that none of the participants decided to take the language primarily as a tool to be used in their future careers also indicates in my opinion how they see the language learning as a means to fulfill their personal interests in the present. Most of them admitted that it would be nice if in the future they use their knowledge of the

language, but it definitely was not in their mind when they started learning the language. Duak sees himself working with his father as an economist in the future. He thinks that if Japanese will help him in the future,

> in terms of my business it will be nice since Thailand is now starting to have a relationship with Japan. But I am not really aiming at this. If I could speak with them and do business with them [the Japanese] it will be a bonus.

David has problems picturing himself working at all. He admits that he does not see himself as a worker in the possible frameworks where Chinese might be used; "Not teaching, not in the police or the FBI, not working in an office and doing research." As I mentioned earlier, Tricia never saw Chinese as a tool for a job, but as a result of her many years of study and her involvement in missionary work, she is thinking about the possibility of going to China, where Chinese will come in handy to her not as a way of communication, but as a way to gain respect among the locals. She believes that if indeed she ends up in a mission in China, "the people will be open to me because I took the time to learn their language." In other words, her future interest was influenced by the language and not the opposite, which shows that her initial intention was to fulfill her curiosity and respect for this different culture. Titiana and Lisa never really see themselves as connecting their future jobs to the language they are learning. Moshe's primary motivation to learn the language was his Jewish identity, and he sees himself using it "at the present." He sees it as a tool to "communicate by phone or letters to friends in Israel." He also believes that using another language can be a mental exercise that "can keep my mind sharp." He is not sure about the use of the language in the future; he sees a possibility of using it if he becomes an American government employee and

they "will move me to Israel." As we can see, learning a language was not initiated for purposes of a future job.

Learning habit. In regard to their learning habits, it was interesting to note that whenever they were asked to describe the learning strategies that helped them to reach their current level they could not really answer. It emerged that none of them really planned their learning stages; it seems as if they all went with the flow and moved from one level to another without too much intention. When I asked Tricia to explain to me how as an American she reached such a high level in Chinese, she said, "I do not know." And Lisa claimed that "she does not know how to achieve." The only thing that David added to this discussion was that even though he does not know what allowed him to achieve his current level, he said, "I know that this is possible to learn." Like many others, Tricia admitted that she almost dropped the language since she wanted to study Greek, but somehow she found herself in a Chinese class again. Duak who reached his original goal and could read Japanese comics after two years, decided to stay and to concentrate on "really learning it." It almost seems as if they were drawn unintentionally to the languages. Such a phenomenon demonstrates, in my opinion, an indicator (together with the above mentioned characteristics), as to how the language learning was used by the interviewees to satisfy their personal needs either as a tool for self-enrichment or to reach personal goals that are not related to a future career, but help them fulfill themselves as individuals.

Awareness of their language ability. All the learners define what it means to know a language and can clearly evaluate their ability in the learned language.

There were two components to their definition: first, that to know means to respect the culture that the target language represents. (As Titiana said, "knowing means knowing the culture"). And secondly, that to know means to communicate. This was a strong point that was emphasized during most of the interviews. The main component of communication is the ability to speak. Lisa defines it: "being able to talk and understand a foreign language means to know the language." And David adds that he thinks he knows Chinese since "I can talk about social politics, history, and daily stuff.". He adds that "communication is a key to knowing."

What was interesting was the fact that they declined to relate language knowledge with the level of their ability to communicate. According to Moshe, everyone can determine what is the amount they want to know in Hebrew, knowing a language "is not a question of amount," since what is good for one is not good for the other, he believes that for some "to know the alphabet is enough." What was more interesting is the fact that he defined knowing a language as a "growing process".

They all recognize that they are learning difficult languages. Moshe emphasizes the fact that Hebrew is different from English and almost seems impossible because "it is written differently," and David admits, "Once you passed the understanding of the sounds [in Chinese], it is easy." Most of them are very realistic about their abilities, and can respect what is difficult for them and what is easy in the learned language. For Lisa, speaking is difficult since she does not feel comfortable while speaking; she claims, "I find reading and writing much easier because I can stop and look for a word." For Titiana, writing Japanese is the most difficult, and for Tricia what seems difficult in Chinese is to comprehend; it takes her "a minute longer that the rest of the class." She

explained why writing Chinese characters seems easier: "I really like it because I can see how they were envisioned. I find them interesting enough so I do not get annoyed with them. I am happy that I can do it." David, on the other hand, says that it is easy for him to talk in Chinese; what it is hard is "listening to the news and reading the newspaper." He admits that "my reading is still weak but I know enough to clear it up," and Duak is struggling with writing.

Although most of them can clearly point to their difficulties in the language, they all admitted that such difficulties have rarely caused them to experience a crisis that would force them out of learning the language. They all claim that their strong motivation allows them to overcome all obstacles, including a bad performance of a teacher. As David indicated, "To have a good teacher helps, but if you are really interested it will not prevent you from taking the language even if the teacher is not that good." And Titiana adds that she never had a crisis because of her strong motivation; "I guess if you are motivated it is not difficult."

Their realism about their ability makes them proud of their achievements. They admitted that they are happy to be appreciated for their efforts, and even mentioned how it is important to them to be appreciated. Titiana mentioned proudly that she enjoys answering curious people's questions about the language; "I like doing that." Lisa is proud when her mother, a kindergarten teacher, asks her help in Hebrew vocabulary and says, "I feel proud of myself." David and Tiricia enjoy the attention they get from the fact that they are learning Chinese: "They are very surprised." Titiana likes the appreciation of her classmates who support her by praising her for her accent. She said, "I am very flattered."

Although they could not explain how they achieved their current level in the target language, they all recognize the fact that it is a result of a process that takes time. Titiana says that "learning is a process," and Lisa adds that only motivation can cause people to "put the time into it." David admits that "it can take a long time to understand," and therefore he spends "a lot of time on homework."

We can conclude that these learners can realistically evaluate the nature of the language that they are studying, and their ability to function in it. They also have a clear idea how to define their knowledge and how to overcome the obstacles. In my opinion, such attitudes create a mature language learner. Maybe their maturity also results from the fact that they are experienced language learners, since in most cases the target language discussed in the interviews was the third even fourth foreign language that they have learned or are learning.

Emotional relationship with the target language. Notwithstanding their realistic approach to their language ability, the students defined the language they are learning in terms of relationships. They declared that they did not see the language that they are studying as a *foreign* language, but as a language that became, together with the culture it represents, part of them. They claimed that when you learn a language, as Titian said,

> You have certain feelings towards it. I cannot explain what feelings I had towards Spanish, because I do not remember. But in Japanese, I love the experience of the language, the fact that you can say a word and an idea in a different language.

Tricia, on the other hand, developed a relationship with all the languages she studied, since "Languages are something I like ... I enjoy languages." Her explanation of her ability to do so is that, "It comes easy to me." David compared his relationship in Chinese

to the other languages he studied. He admits that he lost interest in Russian and French because the mysticism was gone after a certain point. But, "in Chinese it is always there." The feelings of those who study Hebrew are stronger in that they can identify a stronger relationship to Hebrew compared to the other languages they learned. They see the other languages as "foreign" compared to a full integration with Hebrew. As Moshe explains: "I think that there is a unique flow to the language … I think it is definitely special …there are all the unique grammatical concepts and ideas and tricky letters… which make it more unique and complex." He almost sings a love song to the language and adds, "I do not consider it a foreign language to me. I considered Spanish a foreign language to me."

Summary

This study clearly showed that the interviewees, learners of Hebrew, Japanese and Chinese, at advanced level courses shared common characteristics, both as individuals and as learners. They seemed to be experienced people both in life and in language learning. They went through a process of living in different worlds as well as learning different languages. They seemed to be unique and different in their environment, in school or at home. In the same way, they differentiate themselves by choosing to study a difficult language and they are independent in their lifestyle as well as in their language learning. They are also passionate and willing to invest feelings into the language they are learning.

The remaining questions to ask are, if indeed, these are unique qualities for advanced learners of difficult foreign languages, or if learners at advanced commonly

taught language courses share similar qualities. We should ask the question if these qualities are unique to learners at the advanced level courses, or if learners at other levels share some of these qualities. In order to answer these questions, there is a need to expand our research to those broader sectors of the language learning population.

What is clear to me from this study is the fact that my prior assumption that all learners at the advanced language courses (specifically those who are learning difficult languages in an American college) are motivated to reach this level in relation to career ambitions or plans, is not true. The fact that most of my interviewees were drawn into learning and continue to do so in order to satisfy personal interests, raises many questions about the nature of the program that we offer at Brandeis and in higher education in general. As the Director of the program, I know that the goal is to help students achieve a future utility with the language mainly in the framework of a future job. Such contradictory findings will lead me to revise my curricula in order to address the real needs of my learners.

3.1.2. Pilot study # 2

In my second pilot study, I also chose to examine those learners who decided to continue into the advanced level in their target language, although this is time in two different language programs: the Hebrew and Oriental Languages program, and the Romance Languages program. I had two goals in this study: to examine how advanced learners in more commonly languages compared to advanced learners in less commonly taught languages, as well as to expand the framework of the research to a larger scale.

In this study, the students were asked to respond to a questionnaire. The topics of this questionnaire (see appendix) were based on the information I had gathered from a previous study I conducted of six learners in advanced courses in Hebrew, Japanese, and Chinese at Brandeis. From this prior study I concluded that there are three main areas to focus on in examining these learners:

- the learners as students in the university,
- their native language background,
- their experience as foreign language learners,
- their notion about language learning, and
- their use of the foreign language they learn outside the classroom.

91 students out of 110 participated in Pilot Study #2; the breakdown by the language they were studying is as follows (See Figure # 1 in the appendix)

Spanish: **24**

French: **9**

Japanese: **7**

Chinese: **7**

Hebrew: **44**

These participants represent two groups of language learners that are currently being studied in the USA: those studying the commonly taught languages, such as French and Spanish, and those studying the less commonly taught languages, such as Hebrew, Japanese, and Chinese. The latter group also represents the most difficult languages to learn by those whose native language is English, as defined by the Foreign Language Institute (Omaggio, 1993, p. 27) .

The findings from this study provide the evidence that led me to characterize this group of learners, as well as suggest further ways to deepen our understanding of the factors which contribute to sustained and successful foreign language learning.

Description of Findings:

A. Learners' linguistic background:

1. Native language

The students' native language background is important in order to understand the level of difficulty that they face in order to become proficient users of the target language. As we noted above, one of the elements that helps to determine the level of difficulty in acquiring a new language is the learner's native language.

The students who participated in this survey are learners of five foreign languages, three of them are considered to be difficult languages for English native speakers: Hebrew, Japanese, and Chinese. Most of the participants' native language is English (75%), and these native English speakers also tend to study the easier languages French and Spanish, as expected. Unexpectedly, however, there was the highest percentage of native English speakers among the Hebrew learners (84%). This is a surprising figure due to the fact that Hebrew is a difficult language. This fact may suggest the reasons for learning Hebrew are such that its obvious level of difficulty is not an obstacle for it. As expected in Chinese and Japanese, the percentage of English native speakers was very low, especially in Chinese, where it is 28%, while in Japanese it is 43%. Since both languages, Chinese and Japanese, have the same level of difficulty, it

might mean that Japanese is simply more appealing than Chinese to foreign language learners. (See Figure #2 in the appendix).

The other 25% of the participants are native speakers of a variety of languages including Russian, Portuguese, Malaysian, Bulgarian, Thai , Japanese, Chinese, Polish and Hebrew. It is interesting to note how many of the participants are studying their own native tongue or had grown up in an environment where the target language was used as a native language.

This number is lower among the easier languages--for example, among Spanish learners only one person (hence 4% of Spanish learners) said that he/she is bilingual and grew up in an English/Spanish environment. None of the French learners had French as a native language. In the difficult languages, the percentage of learners who had these languages as a native language is much higher: in Chinese we find the highest percentage of all, 43%, yet in Japanese only 14%, and in Hebrew only 7%. In Chinese another 28.5% of learners had also studied Korean, which is close to Chinese; this makes the Chinese advanced learners the largest group to study Chinese not as a difficult language. What can be observed from these figures is that the difficult languages seem not to attract the same kind of learners as Spanish and French, and the relationship between the native language and the target language may account for the difference. (see Figure #3 in the appendix).

2. The learner's background in the target language.

It is clear to all practitioners in the field of foreign language acquisition that in order to be able to participate in advanced courses in a given language, the learners need to have the appropriate background, whether it was acquired through formal or informal

methods. In order to understand how those learners reached their ability to participate in advanced foreign language classes, it was important to trace their background in the learning process of the target language.

Since the questionnaire aimed only to identify areas for further investigation, it did not allow me to elaborate much while phrasing the questions, and therefore the question was left open. An indication that this question was not clear enough was the fact that some respondents said that they did not have previous experience in the target language. What they probably meant to say was that they had acquired the language informally. But since there was no specific indication regarding their previous learning process, I treated this question as if it had not been answered.

The ambiguity of the question elicited different types of information from different students. Some related only their experience at Brandeis; others related only their learning process prior to enrolling in language courses at the university. Many specified the amount of time they spent in the programs they were in, but others ignored this, and so on. A few chose not to answer at all. Although as a result the data that was collected through this question was difficult to analyze, since not all participants responded in comparable terms, there was enough information to allow me to reach the following conclusions: (See Figure # 4 in the appendix).

In **Spanish,** only 20 answered the question, and of these, 17 mentioned high school experience and 5 of the 17 had also had middle school experience. It is interesting to note that all of those who started in middle school had only middle school experience before studying in the program at Brandeis. This fact might suggest that continuation plays an important role in achieving the ability to study in advanced level courses in

Spanish. Two participants had taken AP courses, and two others had had informal exposure to the language, such as a trip to a Spanish-speaking country, or a home environment that taught them the language. Only one of the twenty participants who answered this question started learning Spanish at Brandeis.

In **French**, out of a total of 9, 8 students gave details about their previous experience. All of them had spent some time in an academic setting before entering the advanced course at Brandeis; 7 of them specifically mentioning their high school experience, and 2 of them having studied it in their junior year. One of them hosted an exchange student in her home, so she had the opportunity to study French informally. It seems that as in the case of Spanish, most of the previous background consisted of high school preparation, in contrast to the Chinese and Japanese learners.

In **Japanese**, although all seven participants indicated that they had learned Japanese previously, only six of them gave details about it and, therefore, I will analyze only their responses. Four out of the six had previous experience in the target language before coming to the program at Brandeis. Three of them had studied in formal education settings ranging from elementary school to college-level courses. It is interesting to note that two of these three had informal exposure to the language in addition to academic courses. One learner had learned the language only in an informal context through TV. Two students started learning only in the Brandeis program. What is interesting about this group of learners is the high percentage of learners who had informal exposure to the language as well as the variety of academic frameworks where they learned it, such as elementary school in Japan, international school in Japan, or college courses in Bulgaria.

In **Chinese,** 6 out of the 7 participants gave detailed information about their

learning experience. None of them had only university-level experience with the language. Three of them lived in an environment where the language was mainly used at home. What is interesting to note is that even those who took academic courses in Chinese did so in the natural environment of the language, such as a summer program in China.

In **Hebrew**: 43 participants out of the 44 described their previous experience. Unlike the other groups of participants, many Hebrew learners started their language learning in elementary school, almost half of them (22 participants) having attended Jewish elementary schools where Hebrew was studied as a language and used in other Judaic studies. (6 of these students continued in high school). Only five participants started learning Hebrew in high school. Only 3 took Hebrew at Jewish complementary schools that are non-intensive programs. Three started at the college level, only one of them at Brandeis. Only 3 come from an Israeli home environment where Hebrew is used by at least one parent.

There are two phenomena that are unique to the Hebrew learners. The first has to do with the fact that most of them went to elementary school or afternoon schools, where Hebrew was taught, and therefore have been exposed to the languages for many years, for some between 7 and 12 years. The other phenomenon is the fact that these students either simultaneously studied the language in different frameworks, e.g. Hebrew school and Jewish summer camp, or experienced the language in Israel, either studying in high school, university, or Ulpan (Hebrew school for new immigrants).

When examining the findings regarding the background of all the participants in advanced Hebrew courses, it is clear that most of them had previous experience before

enrolling in the language program at Brandeis. While Spanish and French learners' previous experienced consisted mostly of high school classes, Hebrew learners started earlier in elementary school and continued in various other frameworks. In learning Chinese and Japanese, many advanced learners came from the natural environment where the language is used, the family or the country. None of them had taken it in as an academic subject either in junior or senior high school.

3. Experience of learning other languages.

The purpose of this question was to examine whether the learner had broader foreign language experience and if so what other languages they tended to study.

Of the **Spanish** learners, 20 out of 80 had studied languages other than Spanish. The majority went through learning a variety of different languages, ranging from English as a Second Language to Hindi, Chinese, French, German, Ancient Greek and Guzarti. Most of them learned either French, Latin, or Hebrew. Seven of them studied Hebrew, either at Hebrew school or at Brandeis. Six students studied French, mainly in high school, and 4 also studied Latin in high school. Fourteen studied one other language, and 6 of them learned 2 or more other foreign languages in addition to Spanish. The level of proficiency achieved varied from advanced proficiency to merely recognizing some elements of the target language, such as the Hebrew alphabet.

Of the **Japanese** learners, 6 out of the 7 participants had experience with other foreign languages. Two of them studied only one additional language--English as a foreign language. The other 4 have a rich experience in foreign language learning, each

of them having studied 2 other languages or more, including French and Spanish, but also Chinese, Thai, Russian, and Norwegian.

Of the **Chinese** learners, all 7 participants had experienced learning other languages. Four of them had studied one additional language; the other 3 studied 2 or more other languages, and one of them had studied 6 languages. The variety of languages learned are similar to those mentioned earlier, including French, Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, Japanese, and Latin. For 2 of them, English had, at one point, been studied as a foreign language. None of them reported learning Spanish.

Of the **French** learners, 6 out of the 9 participants gave valuable information regarding their experience. The other 6 had studied different languages varying from Spanish, Italian, Latin, Arabic, Ancient Greek, Hebrew, and even American Sign Language. Four of them had taken one additional language and 3 had taken 2 or more additional foreign languages. Some of them had taken the additional language in high school, others at the University. Notable was the fact that few mentioned trips to different places as a source for learning; one of them wrote she had learned from such a trip "not formally, picked up words randomly." Two of the participants when asked about their experience gave evaluation and recommendation regarding their experience. One of them suggested that only by practice and pain is a language learned.

Of the **Hebrew** learners, thirty-seven students reported on their experiences in learning other languages. Twenty-three of them had studied at least one additional language, and thirteen had studied two or more additional languages. Sixteen of the Hebrew learners had studied Spanish, and fifteen out of the Hebrew participants had studied French. Three of the Hebrew learners had studied English as a second language.

Several learners had studied other languages that were mentioned such as Chinese, Japanese, Yiddish, and German at the University. One of the Hebrew learners had studied a semester of Arabic in Israel. One learner referred to her studies of Aramaic (an Ancient Semitic language that is mainly used in reading) as an experience in learning another foreign language.

Many of the Hebrew learners were emotionally expressive regarding their experiences. One wrote, "I enjoy learning other languages and cultures." Another wrote, "I studied Spanish for three years; I do not remember it. It meant nothing to me"; and another student recounted his experience in learning French as follows: "I took French in high school and I hated it." Others evaluated the outcomes of their learning: "I never mastered Spanish; I took it through high school." Other students compared language programs they experienced: "I have been more successful in mastering Hebrew than I was in Spanish, mainly because I learned Spanish in high school and the Brandeis program is more intensive."

The majority of the advanced-level students in all languages who were interviewed are experienced language learners. Seventy-nine out of the 91 (or 87%) had learned other foreign languages. (See Figure #5 in the appendix for distribution according to group.) Forty-four of them (or 56%) had studied at least one other language, and 29 (or 37%) had studied two other languages or more. There were a number of students who claimed that they had this experience, but did not provide details; therefore they were not included in the calculations of the above breakdown (see Figure # 6 in the appendix).

4. Experiencing the language in its natural environment

The idea behind this question was to see how many students had had the opportunity to use the target language in the country where it is spoken.

A. Spanish: Seven students out of the 24 had visited a Spanish-speaking country. Only 3 of them used it in the context of school or work, and not for tourism.

B. Japanese: All 7 respondents had visited Japan at some point in their study. Only 4 of them had used it in the context of school or work.

C. Chinese: All respondents had traveled abroad at one point of their life. Six out of the 7 had spent time in a country where Chinese is the spoken language--China, Hong Kong or Taiwan. Two were originally from Hong Kong. Another two studied in China. One student had participated in an exchange program in Hong Kong and Korea, and another had visited Taiwan.

D. French: All participants had traveled abroad. Six of them spent time in a Francophone country or province such as France, Quebec, or Belgium. Only two students had traveled for learning purposes.

E. Hebrew: All participants had spent time abroad. Thirty-six of them had spent time in Israel. Many participants emphasized both the amount of time spent there, and the purpose of their trips. Many of them traveled more than once: 8 times in one case; another indicated "Many times." And they mentioned extended stays of "one year" "six months" and so on. Eighteen had studied in Israel either in high school programs or at university, and two lived there for more than one year. One of the participants was born in Israel.

The majority of students in each group went through the experience of visiting abroad. Among the learners of Hebrew, Chinese, and French, a large percentage visited the country where the target language is in use. This percentage was highest among Hebrew learners, many of whom had visited Israel for longer periods for learning purposes.(see figure # 7 in the appendix)

B .The learners' academic background:

Only those students at Brandeis who major in an area in which language is important are required to enroll in advanced level courses. For example, Spanish is required for those who major in the Romance languages department; Hebrew is required for those who major in Judaic studies; Chinese and Japanese are required for those whose concentration is Asian studies. Therefore, I had assumed that the majority of the students enrolled in those classes are indeed majoring in the above areas. I was surprised to find out that most of the advanced learners are majoring in unrelated areas. Only among those who are studying Chinese or Japanese did I find a significant number of students whose area of concentration relates to the language they are studying. In Chinese, three out of the seven students participating (42%), are majoring in Asian studies. Among the Hebrew learners, nineteen out of the forty-four participants (43%) are studying towards a degree in Judaic Studies. As one can see, not half of them study the language because of academic requirement.

In the other linguistic groups, the number of students who study the languages to satisfy the requirement is significantly lower. Among the twenty-four advanced Spanish learners, only four (17%) take it because of the major requirement. The largest group

(25%) is often studying Economics. Among the Japanese learners, only two (28%) are studying it for their major in Asian studies. Among these Japanese learners, the largest group (42%) is also studying Economics. In French, the numbers if those studying for a major requirement are the lowest (6%). The largest group (30%) is studying Psychology as a major. (See Figure # 8 in the appendix.)

What can be concluded from the above data is that there are significant reasons that attract students to continue their study of languages; the next paragraphs will explore these reasons.

C. Reasons for studying the language

The students' responses indicated five reasons underlying their decision to pursue the study of a foreign language at the advanced level. The responses varied from one learner to another: there were students who mentioned only one reason, and others who mentioned more than one. Although in each group of learners a variety of reasons could be found, each language was associated with a dominant reason. The five reasons include: future utility, interest, pleasure, preservation, and academic requirement. In the following discussion, I will specify how the above reasons correlate to each group of learners.

A. Spanish

Fifteen out of the 24 students claim that the main reason for studying the language is their hope to use it in the future. Some related it to a future profession such as practicing medicine in the United States. Others planned to engage in business in California where " 50% are Hispanic." Another student sees himself living in Los

Angeles and believes he will need to know Spanish there. Others simply recognize that Spanish is "widely spoken" in their society and thus important to know.

Eight Spanish learners claim that they study the language because either they "love languages" in general or are "interested in classical languages" in particular. Others "love the sound" of the language or the "culture of the people who speak it." It is interesting to note that 9 students claim that they are studying Spanish because it is both useful and enjoyable to study. Three learners report studying it as a school requirement; two of them are minoring in Spanish, and the third wants to spend a semester in a university in Spain. Only one student reported studying it because of family reasons: "My family is from Guatemala and they do not speak English."

B. Japanese

As with Spanish learners, the main reasons reported for studying the language is the students' belief that it is a useful language to know, or that they find it an interesting language to know. Three students believe that they will have a "better place in the world" if they are able to communicate in Japanese, mainly for "business" purposes.
Three others claim that it is an interesting language to know, but do not explain why. Only one student feels the obligation to improve his/her language skill because they are originally from Japan and "need to know my own country's language."

C. Chinese

Five out the 7 respondents claim that they will benefit in the future from studying Chinese at the advanced level. One plans to use it in a "mission to China"; a student from Hong Kong would like "to be ready" when the island is returned to China. A mainland Chinese student reports that he wants to practice his mother tongue. A Cantonese speaker

reports wishing to extend his proficiency to Mandarin. Only 2 students claim that they are learning Chinese because it is an interesting or pleasurable experience.

D. French

Most of the French learners report that they are studying the language because of its beauty; one student commented that French is "more beautiful than other languages"; another notes, "It is very beautiful language." Others mention that they "like it," or "enjoy it." One student admitted that she "got tired of Latin" and saw French as a better alternative. Only one student wanted to know French in order to renew a family tradition; "My family spoke French few generations back and I would like to renew it."

E. Hebrew

Nineteen out the 20 responses indicated that they wished to be fluent in Hebrew because of their "personal connection to Israel and Judaism." Some want "to live in Israel one day"; others claim that since Hebrew is the "language of the Jews and the Jewish texts" it is "the key to the Jewish religion." For some this connection is explained through their family relations: "My mother speaks Hebrew to me" or "My father is an Israeli and I would like to respond in the same language" to him." Others are seeking to develop a body of academic knowledge that will connect them to the Jewish-Israeli experience; understanding Hebrew better will help them "broaden understanding of Hebrew authors." Many others expressed their view of the utility of the language by expressing their desire to use the language: "To enhance my vocabulary and my conversation skill." Others view proficiency as fulfilling a dream: they "have always wanted to be able to speak Hebrew." Only one viewed Hebrew as equally useful to any other language, "only another language I feel that might be of use."

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Fourteen students are seeking to preserve their knowledge by continuing their study of Hebrew at the advanced level. These students recognize that their current level is a valuable achievement that they do not wish to lose. They all mentioned their wish to preserve their knowledge, "keep up what I know", as well as to improve it: "I have a strong background and want to make it perfect." Many are proud of the years that they have spent on the language. They mention the history of their learning: "I started in first grade", or "I have studied for fourteen years."

D. How learners perceived their level

Many of those who participate in advance language courses are in fact still functioning at the intermediate level. These courses thus have dual goals--both to help students attain an advanced level, and to help the already advanced learner to strengthen their language skills.

The goal behind asking students to evaluate their level was to see how realistic they are in terms of their own abilities. There was an interesting correlation between the length of time students spent studying the language and their assumptions regarding their level, in particular with regard to the accuracy and realism of their self-evaluation.

A. Spanish

In advanced level Spanish courses, fifteen participants out of the 24 considered themselves intermediates, while only 4 claimed to be advanced. Two saw themselves as in between intermediate and advanced and one participant placed him/herself in between advanced and superior. One Spanish learner ranked herself at the superior level, probably because she was Brazilian and her native tongue was Portuguese (closely related to the target language).

B. Japanese

Five out of the 7 participants saw themselves as intermediate and the two that claimed to be advanced were those with a strong background in the language; one's native language was Japanese and the other was a bilingual student coming from an environment where both English and Japanese were spoken.

C. Chinese

Among the participants who are Chinese learners, we can find a similar phenomenon. Four out of the 7 learners who claimed to be advanced in Mandarin were those with a strong background in Cantonese, the other major dialect of the Chinese language. One of them grew up speaking Chinese and learning about Chinese culture, the other was brought up in Hong Kong as a bilingual Korean-Cantonese, and the other two came from homes where Cantonese was spoken. It is interesting that one student with a similar background claimed to be in between the intermediate and the advanced level, probably because he did not feel that his writing skills were strong enough. Two learners saw themselves as intermediate. Although one of them was a native speaker of an Asian language, Korean, and the other an American whose native language was English, both were experienced language learners. The native Korean speaker had learned three other languages and the other student had learned six foreign languages. Probably their extensive experience made them more realistic regarding their ability in the language.

D. French

Most of the participants who are French learners evaluated themselves as intermediate. Two placed themselves in between intermediate and advanced; only two thought that they were completely advanced.

E. Hebrew

Most of the participants who are Hebrew learners saw themselves as advanced learners. For 23 participants out of the 44 this is not surprising because most of them had been in the learning process for a long time. Many had started their Hebrew learning in

kindergarten or elementary school and had visited Israel at least once. Only 15 claimed to be intermediate and 2 saw themselves as between intermediate and advanced.

One student claimed to be in between advanced and superior. Three participants claimed to be superior, and, like the others, they had been studying Hebrew for most of their schooling life. As one wrote, "I have learned Hebrew my whole life and spent a year and half in a Hesacel Yeshiva [Jewish religious school]." One of them studied in Israeli high school for a year, and the other spent time in Israel. What it is interesting is that at the time they answered the questionnaire, both were studying at the higher level of the conversational class, and this fact might have influenced them regarding their level. Two of them differentiated among language skills in their ranking of themselves; one of them wrote, "advanced in conversation, intermediate in reading and writing" and the other mentioned that she was "superior in understanding, advanced in speaking, and intermediate in grammar."

As I mentioned earlier, there seems to be a correlation between the assumed level of proficiency in the language by the learners and the background of their language study, i.e., the more extensive the background, the higher students place themselves. I assume that the length of the learning process gave the learners a sense of familiarity and comfort which influences their assumptions regarding their level. What was especially interesting to see was that the more experienced they were in learning foreign languages in general, the more realistic they were regarding their level. These two correlations need to be investigated further in later research. (see Figure # 10 in the appendix)

E. Extracurricular activities

In the pilot study I conducted before this research took place, I found that most of the participants were very active in helping their communities either at the university or elsewhere, through activities that included membership in student groups, teaching underprivileged children, and various other community services. I wanted to see if indeed we can characterize advanced language students as people who are deeply committed to their communities and other social causes. However, the findings of this survey did not support this assumption. Most of the advanced learners are interested in a variety of extracurricular activities, such as sports, social events, art and so on; only a few are dedicated to social issues. Therefore, I believe that this question did not contribute to the understanding of the advanced foreign learner in higher education.

Conclusion

The findings from the pilot research described above indicate that there is a relationship between the learners' background and their current level of language study. Most of the participants had exposure to the language they are currently studying before they came to Brandeis. Participants who are enrolled in advanced Spanish and French and had previous exposure to the language gained that exposure in middle or high school. A large percentage of learners of Hebrew, Chinese, and Japanese, however, started learning these languages earlier in life, in elementary school. The more prior experience they had, the higher their current perception of their level of learning. The advanced learners can be considered experienced language learners, since a higher percentage of them had also studied another language.

It is somewhat surprising that few participants studied at the advanced level with the hope of using the language in future careers, or even for their major requirement. The dominant motivations reported for advanced learning in a specific language were interest in the culture, pleasure, or as a tool for enhancing their identity. While the issue of identity was emphasized among the learners of Hebrew, Chinese, and Japanese, the learners of French had a more romantic view of the language they are learning.

Among the learners of Chinese and Japanese, a large percentage of participants are studying their native tongue, although the percentage among the Chinese learners was significantly higher than among the Japanese learners. This finding challenges the view regarding the level of difficulty of these languages compared to the others. As I explained earlier, there are languages that are considered more difficult than others in the context of Americans whose native language is English. However, in this group of participants difficulty might not be an issue since many of the participants are trying to improve their own native tongue.

One notable implication of these findings is that there is a gap between the University's policy regarding the purposes of the foreign language programs, and advanced students' actual motivation for study . While the University hopes to enhance students' understanding of other cultures, as well as to equip them with a research or career-related tool, most of the advanced learners have other motivations. That is, while the University seeks to open students' minds to new languages and other cultures, most advanced students either continue a language which they had previously learned or study a given language in order to learn more about themselves and their own culture.

Although this pilot research had a high proportion of responses, it is clear that we cannot generalize the findings until a larger sample or more in-depth investigation takes place.

The survey that was used as the method of gathering the information for this pilot study presented challenges for analysis. The open-ended questions resulted in non-parallel or non-comparable information, since each participant answered it according to his/her understanding. Non-parallel data was also a result of the fact that not all participants answered all questions. A few questions were not specific enough, which gave room for different interruptions by the respondents. For example, when asked about their experience with foreign language learning (anticipating data concerning what, when, and how long they had studied other languages), some respondents took the opportunity to offer recommendations on how best to study a language.

Therefore, there is an obvious need for in-depth interviews with the above participants that will help to fill in the missing information or clarify the misunderstandings as well as to delve deeper into interesting issues. For example, the connection between ethnicity and identity and foreign language learning is an issue that came across very strongly in this pilot research and should be developed further

Although most of the learners who participated in this latter study seemed to share common perspectives and attitudes regarding the language learning , there were some differences among those who study commonly and less commonly languages. Most of the subjects admitted that they do not study the language in order to use it in their future careers or even for their university major requirement; they claimed that their motivations in studying the language were their interest and pleasure in the culture, as well as to

enhance their identity. At the same time, it seemed that among the learners of Hebrew, Japanese, and Chinese the identity issue was more emphasized. They had also been engaged for a longer time in the learning process, compared to those who study Spanish and French.

3.2. The current study

Based on the above findings, as well as from my personal engagement with the Less Commonly Taught Languages, I decided to focus on learners that enrolled in advanced courses of Hebrew Japanese and Chinese at Brandeis University. In other words, I decided to expand my first pilot study (see above pp. 106-123) to a larger scale. My earlier research had reinforced two of my assumptions. The first is the notion that learners of "easy" languages are different from learners of "difficult" languages, and that, therefore, these two groups should be studied separately. The second is my belief that qualitative research can provide a more effective framework than quantitative research for understanding learners' characteristics. The quantitative data of my second study did not identify the deeper levels of learners' views, which are crucial, in my opinion, to understanding their characteristics. The questionnaire format provided limited opportunity for participants to express themselves and tell their full stories. The decision to concentrate on the group of learners who are studying difficult languages also has to do with the fact that, as the Director of the Hebrew and Oriental Languages Program, I have a personal attachment to and interest in these learners. I also felt that, while the findings could influence other similar programs, they could especially benefit my own program

In this study, my main focus was to identify the characteristics of fourteen learners enrolled in advanced language courses. Five were learners of Hebrew, four were learners of Japanese, and five were learners of Chinese.

I used interviews as the tool for research. Seidman (1991, p. 10-13) suggests the Dolbeare and Schuman approach of conducting a series of three interviews with each subject. He claims that this is a "model of in depth, phenomenological interviewing" (Seidman ,1991,p.10). Such a series of interviews allows the researcher to understand the context in which the subjects operate. The first interview should be devoted to the subject's life history including topics such as family, schools, neighborhood, friends, and work experience in the hope that this information will help shed light on the participants' perspectives regarding the investigated matter. The second interview is to be dedicated to understanding better their present context by asking interviewees to elaborate on details and give examples of various aspects of their life experience. In the third interview, the participants are asked to explain the meaning of their experience. That is "the intellectual and the emotional connection between the participants' work and life" (Seidman, 1991, p. 12). In other words, the interviewees are given the opportunities to evaluate their experience. I adopted this approach.

Topics covered in the Interview

Section 1- Life History

- family: extended family description
- schooling: history
- neighborhood: description: People, events
- extracurricular activities: trips-camps

- things that were influential: books, teachers, other stories
- learning the language up to this point
- specific memories regarding the learning :difficulties, crises, materials

Section II-Experience in the Present as Language Learner

- In language learning (strategies, styles, grammar, exams), is it the same for each foreign language learned?
- What things do they like most/ least in the learning process in the language?
- What items in the target language are easy/difficult?
- What is the expectation at this stage of the learning?
- What is the motivation to learn/to know?
- What is their favorite teacher/class?
- How do they learn about and feelings/emotions
- In what part of language does the learner perceive him/herself to be strong/weak?
- Why are they studying this particular course?
- How does learning the language connect to their academic learning?
- the language outside the classroom/use feelings
- How to evaluate the learning materials?
- What makes the environment of learning ideal/current?
- Skills: what is easier/more difficult?

Section III-Meaning

- What is the role of the language in your life now and in the future?
- How do you evaluate the total experience as a learner of the language?
- What is missing from your experience?
- How do you believe others view you as learner of the language?
- How do you view other learners of the language?
- What do you regret most in this language learning experience? What do you appreciate?
- What does it mean to know a language? Do you feel you know the language?
- Complete the following sentences in terms of your language learning:.

  -I wish....

  -Israel to me /China to me/ Japan to me ....

  -Israelis are/ Chinese are/ Japanese are.....

  -Hebrew is/ Chinese is / Japanese is....

- How do you feel about talking about yourself as a learner of a foreign language?

The fourteen interviews were recorded and transcribed. However, while reading the transcriptions, I felt that the special dynamic and the atmosphere of the interview were not transmitted. Therefore, I decided to describe the content of the interview in the format of "stories," or "vignettes" to reflect the content and context of the interview as well as its emotional dynamic. According to Seidman (1991), a vignette is "a shorter narrative that usually covers a more limited aspects of a participant's experience"(Seidman, 1991,

p.91). Sideman agrees with Lightfoot and Davis (1997, pp.10-13) that both the interviewee and the interviewer have an active role in creating the profile. While Seidman believes that the profile story should be told in the first person using the words of the participants in order to retain their voices, using only the interview text, Lightfoot and Davis are more open to the possibility of letting the interviewer's voice be heard. In the view of Lightfoot and Davis, the interview has a dynamic and life of its own, and the obligation of an interviewer is to articulate it in order to create the right context for creating the profile of both the participants and the process. This context can also include the interviewer's thoughts and impressions regarding himself or herself, and the interviewee (Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, pp. 3-16).

In my opinion, it is interesting that Lightfoot and Davis, refer to the story of the interviewee as a "portrait," since it implies that the interviewer has more background and power to draw the portrait. Since I agree with Seidman and Lightfoot and Davis that there is a need to present the interviewees in the context of our meeting, I decided to dedicate a chapter in which I used the perspectives of Seidman and Lightfoot and Davis to tell the stories of the interviewees. These stories are presented in the chapter "The Data" (pp) and it precedes the analysis part of this study.

In order to analyze the interviews, I used the traditional method of qualitative research. Seidman describes this process as organizing the data into thematic motifs and identifying the connections between them. The choice of categories is the first level of interpretation that will lead to making the connections for deeper levels of interpretation. The themes that were identified in this study are: beliefs regarding language learning;

learners' backgrounds in learning languages in general, and in the target language in particular; as well as themes that represent their different environments. These themes were used to find the common motifs in the data, as they are specified in the analysis chapter, and include learners' core values, learners' self-awareness, and the motif of support that accompanied the learners in different environments. The commonality between these motifs served to identify the core ideas in the learners' characteristics.

However, while reading through the data again, I found a richness in the data that enabled me to examine other areas which I had not originally targeted. These areas include different aspects of learners' development and their personality traits. In order to understand this evidence, I became familiar with several theories that discuss college students' developmental levels. The main resource for this theoretical framework was a collection of essays by Arnold and King (1997) that deal with this issue. These resources enabled me to create a framework in which to view college-age learners by subjects, in terms of their developmental issues and their personalities. In the context of this research, I decided to relate the findings in the framework of the developmental and personality theories, hoping that in future research, experts from the field of psychology would expand on them.

Therefore, the analysis includes three areas that describe the learners. These areas were established through both the theoretical basis of the psychological aspects of college-age learners, and through thematic identification, reflected throughout the interviews.

All of the interviews were conducted under the conditions required by the human policies of both Brandeis University and Lesley College. The Human Subjects Committee at Brandeis University formally approved the process (see appendix). I visited advanced level courses in Hebrew, Japanese, and Chinese, explained the purpose and processes of my research, and solicited volunteers. The volunteers met with me individually at which time they signed and again reviewed the process, including assurance of confidentiality and the opportunity to review the transcript of their interviews. (See appendix). As promised, their tapes were erased following transcription.

Chapter 4

4. The Data

a. Shelly – (Advanced learner of *Hebrew)*

I was looking forward to my interview with Shelly. I was eager to spend time with a learner who among my colleagues is considered to be unique, and, in their view, represents the type of learner we all hope to have in our courses. Her teachers always refer to her as "smart," "dedicated," and a "special learner." Her level of motivation, her seriousness, and, above all, her ability to quickly grasp the language amazes them. At the time of the interview, Shelly was participating in an advanced Hebrew course that focused on developing both speaking and writing skills. Although originally this course was aimed at preparing learners for their year abroad in Israel, in recent years most of its participants enroll in order to maintain their advanced level skills. Two groups of learners usually participate in this course: the first is a group of learners who spent a year or a semester in Israel and wish to maintain the level of the language; the other is a group

which consists of students who grew up in Israeli families speaking Hebrew as a second language and who wish to extend their knowledge to more formal use of the language in writing and grammar.

My eagerness to talk to Shelly was even greater when it was brought to my attention that Shelly had moved to this advanced level course after only two semesters in the Brandeis Hebrew program (although she had spent a summer in an intensive language program in Israel) while it usually takes between four to five semesters for a student to reach this level. This distinguishes her even among our better students, who may also have attended intensive courses in Israel.

I was a somewhat disappointed that Shelly could meet me only on Wednesday afternoon. Usually Wednesday is my busiest day when I teach two classes, meet with students, and have several administrative duties. However, understanding her busy schedule, I decided to make the effort to talk to her. She came at 2 p.m. after her Hebrew class, and waited politely and patiently sitting on the floor outside my office while I finished my other obligations. She has a somewhat old-fashioned look, very "'60s", with her straight hair pulled back into ponytail. I noticed her chubby checks and was struck by her big brown eyes. With a half smile on her face, she listened to my explanation regarding the purpose of the interview, and expressed her willingness to share whatever she could, and, at the same time, modestly protested when I mentioned her being so special to us in our program. Her low voice and habit of mumbling required me to ask her to speak louder so that I could record the interview. She rarely looked directly at me and had her head bowed during the interview, during which time she sat almost rigidly in her

chair hugging her body. Although she was intent on the interview, she displayed little affect.

She immediately started talking about her connection to Hebrew and Judaism and, to my surprise, she identified herself as an Israeli who was born in the United States. Her Israeli parents had moved to the United States in their twenties; however they never spoke with their children in Hebrew. She thinks they kept Hebrew as their "secret" language, using it only on occasions in which they did not want to be understood. The idea that Shelly and her siblings grew up as American Jewish children seemed strange to me, both as a language educator and as a patriotic Israeli. I could not understand why they kept their children away from their mother tongue, although Shelly admitted that she had acquired the language passively by listening to them. This situation is even more surprising since her parents' English is not good at all: "My dad's English was very bad since he really never learned it properly at school. My mom started her English in high school. She uses catch words that do not fit, but I got used to that."

Until the age of 13, Shelly grew up in California, and lived in a neighborhood in which hers was the only Jewish family and her friends were either Americans or from other parts of the world such as India. This was another extraordinary fact, since from my own experience, most Israelis seek to live either in Jewish or Israeli neighborhoods in order to make it easy for them to practice their beliefs. Nonetheless, it did not seem to bother Shelly's family or interrupt their Jewish Israeli life.

On Friday nights they would have the Shabbat dinner (kidush); her mother lighted the candles and they also celebrated the high holidays. Sharon loved the Shabbat dinner mainly because "it was the only time my whole family was together and it was

special." She was also the only child in her elementary class to be absent during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and recalls that her teachers were supportive and understanding. However, Shelly feels more Israeli than Jewish, " I relate more to Israeli culture than to Judaism." She tells how they were surrounded with Israeli friends, and family members who came to visit, and Israeli music, newspapers, and books.

When Shelly was 13, her family moved to Las Vegas. It seems that Shelly noticed the quizzical expression on my face when she mentioned the word "Las Vegas," and immediately explained that at the beginning she was angry with her parents for moving there without any good reason. In her mind, she was convinced that they wanted to be close to the gambling machines, since her parents used to drive there while they lived in California. However, she fell in love with Las Vegas, saying, "I live in such an ideal place in town; I can get to anywhere…I am very comfortable where I live …there is an Israeli community ..and .. .we live right next to a synagogue."

Shelly attended public schools both in California and Las Vegas. She described herself as an excellent student who enjoyed math the most; she graduated at the top of her class and was valedictorian. Her only frustration in school was English classes. She did not like to write essays and she could not understand why most of her teachers "did not like what I wrote" although she spent hours trying to produce a good essay. In addition, she mentions that she hates "to identify parts of the sentence such as modifiers." It was unexpected to hear such an "anti linguistic" statement from someone I know is capable of learning more than one language and probably uses this linguistic knowledge to improve her Hebrew. It was even more unexpected from a student who loves math and tends to understand the world in schematic ways. Shelly also loved school because of its

framework. The school schedule made her world well organized and allowed her to participate in many extracurricular activities such as playing the piano, which she started at age six, dancing, and Tae-kwon-do.

It seems that her academic excellence and her ability to be involved in so many activities at such a high level made her a leader both in school and at home. In high school, she was a cheer leader, which I understand is very prestigious in the context of American high school culture, and she had many friends: "It was easy to make new friends and get to know new kids." She also helped her mother take care of her disabled sister. Being so successful, independent, and helpful made her mother view her as the role model for her family: " My mother used to say; 'Look at Shelly …she is so smart'" and this made her feel " weird." She believes that her love of school and learning has had a big influence on her life. She deeply believes that the sum of the education she received through her years of public schools "contributed to who I am." Because of her appreciation of her school experience, she has even thought of becoming a teacher.

In terms of learning language, I have already mentioned Shelly's struggle with English and with viewing it in linguistic terms; however her experience with learning Spanish seems different. She admitted that studying Spanish in high school was not difficult at all for her; it was actually fun. She dedicated time mainly to learning the Spanish vocabulary and its grammar. Knowing how she felt about English grammar, I wondered how she managed to acquire Spanish grammar and it seemed that she really did not view it as grammar; for her it was like studying vocabulary without analyzing the language too much. "I heard the teachers conjugate the verbs repeatedly … I did not even have to think what tense to use, it was all so natural." She even tried using Spanish on

different occasions, including watching Spanish soap operas on TV. Since her parents divorced and her father has moved to Colombia, I asked her if she communicates with him in Spanish. She told me how upset she is with her dad since he speaks " broken street Spanish". She is angry because he did not bother to learn it " properly" and for her such an attitude towards a language is "wrong and annoying."

In terms of Hebrew, Shelly's first formal learning of the language was during her elementary school years in the typical framework of most American Jewish children, the Jewish afternoon schools. These schools mainly prepare children for religious observance, teaching tradition and prayers. Most children hate these schools for a variety of reasons; however, Shelly admitted that she liked it very much. She studied in Jewish afternoon school for four years, three hours a day, twice a week, but the only language elements she studied there were the Hebrew alphabet and a few words. Her main motivation to learn more Hebrew was her desire to communicate both with her parents and their extended family. In a visit to Israel in which she could not converse with her relatives, she was asked by them why she did not learn Hebrew, since she heard it at home. She replied that she could not learn a language from only hearing it. As a visual learner, she said she needs to see the language in order to study it. Her recognition that the only way for her to acquire the language is by studying formally made her choose Brandeis for her college education. "Coming to Brandeis was a big factor because I knew that Hebrew was taught here." Although her background was enough to place her at the second semester level, she said that learning was not easy. Her main struggle was understanding Hebrew grammar and her shyness. She was too shy to ask questions in class, since her classmates knew the basic grammar from their first semester curriculum.

With the help of a tutor and studying two hours a day, she soon achieved the same level of knowledge as the others and overtook them. She did not remember this rigorous work as creating any moments of crisis; on the contrary, she admitted that the difficulties had "pushed me to study harder."

The importance of Hebrew in her life was emphasized throughout the interview. She sees Hebrew as an important aspect that defines herself; she feels the "attachment" to the language that is part of her family and her Judaic world. She can not imagine a future without it: "I would always want the language to be part of the connection between myself and my children." Her devotion to learning it makes her "want to learn every word, to know everything there is to know about it." The knowledge and the fact that she "enjoys" it make her feel "closer" to it. She is convinced that the ability to read books and newspapers in Hebrew will make her more "connected to the society [Israeli]." But, above all, it seems that what most excites her is the fact that she can communicate with her mother in her own language. With her eyes shining, she told me "I get excited now that I can talk Hebrew with my mom. It's terrific; she uses words she will never use in English and we are actually having intellectual conversations. She is more herself with me and I am very close with her." She can not have such relationship with her father since he is not in the country and "he speaks to me in his broken English; he still can not believe that I can talk in Hebrew." It is interesting to note that with all her passion for the study of the language, she can still fulfill her other goals in the University. Since she is an Economics major, she can not devote all her time just to learning Hebrew. Her biggest love in the language is words; she likes "building vocabulary" the most. The fact that her teacher makes her explain words in Hebrew by using other words in Hebrew makes her

happy. She hated the translation method that was used in her studies of Hebrew in Israel. "At Brandeis you have to think in another word to understand; it enhances everything." She recognizes her uniqueness in the class since, "I take Hebrew more seriously than the other students in the class." It upsets her when they are not prepared or ignore the learning.

In relation to Israel, she does not at the moment sees herself living there; however, she has strong feeling towards the country. "There is something about being in a place where everyone is Jewish, Israeli; I like this." Her admiration for Israelis is mixed with criticism, " Israelis are rude, but very unique. Something about their attitude. They always had to be strong because of all the wars." Shelly is looking forward to her upcoming year abroad in Jerusalem where she is going to study economics, although she feels sad to leave her family for so long.

I must admit that this was an emotional interview for me, not only because of Shelly's deep appreciation for the language and Israel, but also, as an Israeli who lives outside Israel, I could identify with the dilemma of choosing in what language to communicate with children who have been born here. Shelly's words made it clear to me that my real personality as a parent only could be expressed in my own language and although it is not always comfortable for my children, it is the most healthy for my relationship with them. I also finding myself thinking about my own parents who did not want me to know their "Diaspora" language and talked to me in their non-native Hebrew, and how much we could have gained in our relationships if only I could have communicated with them in their own tongue. These thoughts and feelings help me understand Shelly who makes so much effort and sacrifice to acquire fluent Hebrew.

b. David- (Advanced learner of *Hebrew)*

I have known David for several years. He was my student during his second semester at Brandeis. I remembered him as the quiet, tall, blond blue-eyed student who always sat in the left corner of the room. His politeness and calm behavior, as well as his slight mid-western accent, differentiated him from the rest of the class. His habit of coming late to class made him famous among his classmates. Always wearing the same khaki pants and an oxford shirt, he used to open the door tentatively and, with a polite smile, he used to mumble his apologies. I noticed that, unlike his classmates, he never wore sneakers, but rather leather loafers, which made him look more serious and older. I remember his struggle with the language; he never talked much in class and his grades were not impressive. After that semester, I did not see him for a while, when suddenly, a few semesters later he entered my office to let me know that he had returned to the university, after a year's leave of absence "to deal with some problems at home in Nebraska." He wanted to enroll again in the same course, so he could review the materials. I never thought that he would reach the higher level courses. A few semesters later, he became my student for the second time in the course that is the transition between the intermediate and the advanced levels. I immediately noticed the change in him. He was wearing a "Kippa", (a skullcap worn by orthodox Jews), had grown a beard, and seemed less formal. He was, indeed, more open; his Hebrew had improved, and he loved to argue on topics that dealt with current issues in Israel. He told me proudly that he had become a Hebrew teacher in a local afternoon Hebrew school and that along with the Hebrew language, he taught the Old Testament. When I asked him once why he did not do his homework more consistently, warning him that it might affect his grade, he

looked at me and with half a smile told me, "Unfortunately, it does not always interest me."

Since he is a Judaic Studies major, I was not surprised to find him in our advanced literature course. When I asked to interview him, he politely agreed and gave me the impression that he would do it "to help me," since I had been so supportive to him for all these years. He came to my office, with a huge backpack and stack of mail in his hand. He told me that he is very excited, since he is waiting to hear from different rabbinical schools to which he has applied for graduate work. Knowing of his wish to become a Rabbi, I offered to cancel the interview, so he could go home to read his mail, but with a calm voice he said, "It can wait, I can open it later."

Although I knew some details about his background, I asked him to tell me more so that I could get a fuller picture.

He admits that he loved growing up in the Midwest, in Omaha ("People overall are nicer in the Midwest"), and in addition, the fact that his father "grew up in the same area …it was comfortable." He has two brothers and a stepbrother, his father is a computer programmer and his mother teaches nursing at the university. He is very proud that one of his brothers, who just got married and works for Microsoft, is going to be at Penn State University next year. He does not see anything special about growing up as a Jew in Nebraska. He went to public school, Reform Hebrew afternoon school, used to have plenty of friends with whom he played in the afternoon. Some vacations he spent in a Boy Scouts camp or at a Jewish camp in Wisconsin, and for a few summers he went to visit his grandmother, "a very normal American upbringing."

He describes his Omaha suburb as a " friendly upper middle class neighborhood; you walk to the country club, ranch houses …you could name all the people in the street and you know every body." They were not the only Jewish people there, "They were within walking distance of about four Jewish families." He does not remember any anti-Semitic incidents; although they were "different" he explains that " for my family being Jewish was almost a civic thing, universalistic, American born Jewish." Most of his neighbors were "not practicing Catholics." His family "obviously" observed only Hanukah and Passover, " because they are holidays that most people observe, they are easier to observe and they can be more secular."

During high school, he studied Russian, because the school "had a Russian exchange program." He found it very "interesting" and "fun" since he hosted Russian students and also traveled to Russia to spend time with them. He found it interesting mainly because it was in 1993, "just as all the changes were starting." He was mostly impressed by "how religion was still an important part there," he was surprised that; in spite of the communists who had no religion, his hostess always showed him churches, "a lot of churches." Although for years he studied Russian, he does not remember much, and does not feel any regret about this.

He also had an extensive education in Spanish from fourth grade to high school, and he loved it. He was at the advanced level of Spanish and it was also "fun" because they got to watch TV and to have parties." He is fluent in Spanish and he still likes the language. Because of lack of time, he does not study it at Brandeis.

Coming to study at Brandeis was a big change for him; he wanted to study on the East Coast. Although he applied to Ivy League schools such as Yale and Princeton on the

advice of his counselor he also applied to "safe" places such as Brandeis. He describes his relationships with the school as a "love-hate relationship," however towards the end of his stay here it is more "love." He mostly suffered from the fact "that it is far from home," and it is "a different culture." He claims that "people came across as rude and mean."

He had started to study Hebrew during high school at his Hebrew school. He loved it because only those who wanted to studied there and he "was not forced to do it." David claims that he "picks languages up easily." He does not see grammar as a "problem" because "it just fits a pattern." In terms of vocabulary, "I have to see it a few times …or see it in a context, in a story." However, he likes reading the most: "It is easier to pick up." What is most difficult for him is the writing: "It is hard for me sometimes to even think what to write … I do not know what to say… I think it is frustrating"

His main motivation to study Hebrew is his wish to become a Rabbi of a Reform congregation. "I want to become a rabbi partially because I like studying texts, so Hebrew is interwoven… This is the language I need to know." He enjoys studying Hebrew because he is "happy studying languages, cultures, and that kind of thing." He does not want me to think that there is any emotional aspect involved in his process of learning Hebrew, although he does agree that it has to do with both his religion and his search for identity. However, he chooses to emphasize the fact that "it [Hebrew] is necessary for growing with my religion." He sees it as a continuum process which is part of his intellectual growth: "It is a kind of continuation all the way through." The only feelings he has towards the language is when he is succeeding in learning something new, such as, "to get a new story and to be able to read it or the first time when you look at

Rashi [Middle Age Hebrew writing]". He believes he has high abilities in the language because, "I can understand people talking to me, most printed texts, and newspapers." As I mentioned earlier, he confessed that he has difficulties with writing; however, when the assignment is very specific and detailed, he feels that he can succeed in it. "I did not like the poems that they read this semester, because I do not like poetry that much," and he admitted that "in general I do not understand poems." However, what bothered him the most was the fact that "people sometimes pull meanings out of them that are absurd to me" He definitely preferred the stories to the poems. Topics that he likes the most include the relationships between generations, Shoaa (the Holocaust), and immigration to Israel.

Although he is an experienced language learner and most " language classes are the same", they become " standard." He can still appreciate the interaction, and the chance "to show what you are learning." He can not imagine his life without Hebrew since it is "such an important thing in Jewish life" and moreover he sees it as "important religiously."

He has never gone to Israel and he hopes that as part of his rabbinical school he will study there for a year. So far, he practices the language at his work, the Hebrew school at which he teaches, and with Israelis on campus.

Although he needs to complete only four more courses in order to graduate, he has enrolled in six courses so that he can learn more. He admits that some of the materials that he is learning in the Kabbalha (a mystical religious work) he can relate to, some things he admits to being skeptical about.

He sees Hebrew as the language of his ancestors, and Israel as a place that is "important historically, but there is too much emphasis on Jerusalem being holier than

other places in the world." With no hesitation he even criticizes the most holy place "I think it is absurd worshipping at the Kotel. [The western wall]. Jewish religion is supposed to be devoid of idols."

In an attempt to summarize his learning experiences in the Judaic-Studies Department at Brandeis, he says that at the beginning he was at a disadvantage compared to learners from the Yeshivas who were studying with him because he came from such a non-observant environment, and because he saw his religion almost as a "civic duty," After these years "it gets easier" and he is happy about it. He admits that moving from being a non-active Jew to a very active one was his choice, "something I wanted to do." He believes that his "family is missing something" by not being like him, but he does not lose hope because his mother now "is becoming more active." In the past he tried to push his family into it, but now hopes they will do it on their own, since they, like him, understand "that American life is pretty superficial sometimes." His choice to become a rabbi was influenced by an intern rabbi who came to their temple in Omaha and "convinced" him to do so. However, he admits that Judaism for him "is a life style, it is a community, it is a way of relating to God." When I insisted that he talk more about the concept of community, he said, "I guess it is part of my identity, the people I choose to associate with, people who I feel most comfortable with, and I have the most in common with", and, of course, he sees Hebrew as part of it.

The next time I saw David was at his graduation, standing tall in a robe and when his name was read, he looked serious as he went up to get his diploma. I was happy to meet his family whom he proudly introduced to me, and to his girlfriend. Before we hugged goodbye, he said: "By the way, I got accepted to the rabbinical school."

This was a difficult and long interview because David is so reserved and answered in minimum words; often he looked at me without responding at all. I felt that I had to pull more detailed information from him, although he gave it gladly.

c. **Rebecca-** (Advanced learner of *Hebrew*)

My first conversation with Rebecca was over the phone when she called to inquire about our Hebrew program. What struck me most was the way she spoke Hebrew. It was a combination of colloquial and high-level academic language, but at the time, I noticed that her accent was unique; it mingled elements of American English together with typical Israeli pronunciation. She had expressed her wish to study for a Master's degree in Hebrew at Brandeis. I then explained to her that we do not have a Master's degree program in Hebrew, since all degrees in our department are considered to be in Judaic Studies. She insisted I send her the list of our Hebrew courses to her address in San Jose, California. A week later I got another call from her. This time she told me how impressed she was by our course offerings and expressed her strong wish to come and visit. Not knowing what to expect, I invited her to spend a day with us. I was surprised to find how young looking Rebecca was. With long straight hair, a denim dress, and boots, she looked like a teenager to me. I could also see behind her granny glasses, beautiful big blue eyes, and I noticed her nervous laugh whenever she spoke to me. She told me how she wished to pursue her "Hebrew" in an academic setting and how, after an extensive search of other places in the States, she realized that we are the best program for her to pursue this "dream." In addition, she added that I had been her sister-in-law's Hebrew teacher many years ago at Brandeis, and since I had made such a good impression on her,

she wished to study with me. I invited her to watch me teaching my intermediate level class. When we came out she said, "I wish you could teach how to become a teacher like you."

Rebecca matriculated in our graduate program a year later, enrolling in every possible Hebrew class. When I encouraged her to take other courses in the department, she agreed, but she then came back to me saying that she mostly enjoyed the Hebrew courses, and dropped her other courses to join our language program again. That is how she became one of my students in two sequential courses that I teach about teaching foreign languages, specifically Hebrew. In her second semester she also became my assistant; however, her main role was to watch me teaching and learn from it.

When I started this research, she was the first one to volunteer. I do not know if she felt obligated to do so, or if she really wanted to talk to me about herself, but whatever motives she had, I must admit that I enjoyed it very much. Talking with her for the first time in English made a huge difference to me. It was the very first time we had spoken in her native language, and suddenly I realized how clear and thoughtful and intelligent she is. In Hebrew she had sounded tentative and child-like, even with her advanced skills in the language.

She grew up in northern California "all her life" in a minimally observant Jewish family, and was educated in the public school system from elementary school through college. Her father is an electronics engineer, and her mother works in an "engineering capacity. She does something with computers." She proudly mentions her brother, who is a year younger than she, getting his MBA at the University of Pennsylvania. She admires her father for having a "language ability." According to her, he knows "more English

words than anyone I know… and he is sort a guru of English words." His ability allows him to understand many words in German and Spanish, although he can not speak these languages. She believes that her father "really wanted to be an English teacher." Like her father, she inclines more to the liberal arts; her brother, on the other hand, is more into science.

In her undergraduate studies, she majored in religious studies. She did so because she "loves it" and she "believes in doing what you really love." Her motto in life is clear: "to be successful and happy in life you need to follow stuff in your heart and for me it was religious studies." She admitted that studying this was not her first choice. Like most other people, she looked first into more "practical" areas; however, she discovered that "the most practical choice is really to look inside yourself and figure out the talents that you have that you most enjoy; this is your best bet." She claims that only people with such an approach can reach their energy potential to its maximum, and that is how she felt in regard to religious studies. "I enjoy learning about different beliefs that guide [people]…to understand how people think differently in different places around the world, and how it plays out in people's lives."

As a typical Jewish girl, she was first exposed to Hebrew in a "Hebrew school setting." She has good memories from this school: "I was eight years old and I still remember my wonderful morah [teacher in Hebrew]." However, she graduated from Hebrew school with only a "strong grasp of the alphabet…10-20 words, a few verbs, and a few nouns." She could not really function in the language, read or understand the prayers. She also continued her religious studies in high school, but she did not progress in her Hebrew at all.

At the University of California at Santa Barbara, she studied about three years of modern Hebrew and two thirds of a year of Biblical Hebrew. Although her decision to continue studying Hebrew in college was "because I was curious and I needed also to fill my schedule", she admits that she really "loved it." When talking about Hebrew, it was clearly a love relationship with the language: "By studying Hebrew I feel totally alive, it uses all my skills and talents...Hebrew speaks to me personally." This interest ties into her general interest in languages: " I like languages in general; I like to decode things, to analyze and to find out what is the root of the word and how the root branches out into words." She claims that because of her love for languages she can still remember the Spanish she studied in Junior High school and one semester at college. In addition, her interest in people in general contributes to this interest in languages. "I like to communicate with people; I like to understand ideas and the only way you can do it is by studying another language." At the same time, her interest in the Jewish people in particular is obvious:

> I have a lot of respect for the people who live in Israel, I care a lot about the Jewish people, not just American Jewish people or European Jewish people , every one of us in the world, and Israelis have the most difficult roles to play. I have a lot of respect.

After graduating from college, she got an attractive position in the Apple Computer Company, working in professional staff development. For a year and a half she did not study Hebrew; however, she continued her Jewish activities. What triggered her to study more Hebrew was an event that happened one night:

> I went to an Israeli dance and a bunch of Israelis guys starting speaking to me in Hebrew words, words that I knew I recognized. I knew enough to know that what they

> were telling me I used to know, so when I could not remember, I got upset.

That is why she enrolled in Hebrew classes at a local community college. After that, she decided to reinforce her knowledge, so she left her job and spent a year at the Ulpan (an intensive Hebrew course) in Hebrew University Graduate School: "That is really where I learned the acquisition of the language because I did my intensive Ulpan and I lived with Israelis." She studied in several programs in addition to the Ulpan. One of them was the Mechina, which is a preparation course in Hebrew for those foreigners who intend to become regular students at the Israeli universities studying all subjects in Hebrew.

She remembers some moments of "tremendous frustration." However, these moments never caused her to stop the learning process. One such moment she remembers well was in Israel, when she was placed in a higher level course and felt "overwhelmed." Since she knew she was going to an intensive program, she had studied a lot before starting the program. When she came to the first class,

> I had certain expectations from myself…I knew all the tenses inside and out. I had a decent vocabulary, but I still did not understand anything …I was lost…we moved very quickly from one word to the next. I could barely write them down…I was very upset.

Rebecca overcame this crisis by switching to a lower level and by taking advantage of the fact that she lived with Israelis, with whom she did not speak English, so she could "get my ears more used to the language."

When she came back from Israel, she continued her commitment to the language by "initiating relationships with people who spoke Hebrew." She did Israeli dancing, took

semi-private classes in Hebrew with a trained teacher, and in addition studied Judaism and the Bible with a retired professor in Jewish education.

> We would meet once a week for about an hour, but it usually lasted three hours, and we would speak Hebrew all the time and read Hebrew literature, poetry, things from Agnon [a famous Israeli writer who won the Nobel prize for literature].

She believes that her level in Hebrew is advanced, although she recognizes the fact that her level in all skills is not the same:

> My comprehension is the best. In speaking I think I am better informally…I feel comfortable speaking with native speakers, they understand me…they realize that I am American and that I make mistakes… I function well in reading, and my writing is the weakest.

She believes that she has "an adequate vocabulary in Hebrew to be able to express myself."

Before leaving the interview, I wanted to know how much of her appreciation of the language has to do with her search for her identity. She made it clear:

> I am a type of person whose identity has meaning…. For me Hebrew is really a window into Judaism ..and if you want to know what Judaism is you have to talk to Jewish people, the texts, the Tanach [Old Testament], Talmud [ancient Jewish text], it is the core to Jewish tradition and living. If you know Hebrew you are better able to understand that realm…it is cool to communicate…it is a means to understanding.

In the future she hopes to use her knowledge of Hebrew in some "capacity" that might include teaching Hebrew, studying texts, or even living in Israel. She confesses that she has "a special place in my heart for the people who live in Israel, friends, people I know personally".

After she left, I listened again to this interview; I wanted to make sure I understood the reasons for her passion for the language and for Israel. I once again found myself admiring her and her friends for making so much effort to master a language and a tradition that is so natural for me. I once again found myself wondering about the courage that Rebecca and her friends have, to leave their sophisticated jobs and to pursue their need to fulfill their dreams and to be happy. I found myself envying them, hoping to learn a lesson from their experience.

d. **Tova –** (Advanced learner of *Hebrew)*

I was looking forward to interviewing Tova. Although I have known her for several years as her teacher and advisor, I had never had the opportunity to have a lengthy conversation with her in her native English tongue. From the first day I met her, she looked different to me from most of our students in the Hebrew program. When I entered the room the first day of class, I noticed this beautiful, exotic, dark-haired student, sitting separated from the others. She stared at me with big beautiful green eyes, framed by her high cheekbones; her tanned skin clearly indicated that she came from a sunny place. She wore tight jeans and a short tank top that revealed her "belly button." I was surprised to find out how well she spoke Hebrew, and for a moment I mistook her for an Israeli student who was trying to enroll in Hebrew class for an "easy A." Soon enough I got to know her better, and to ignore her provocative style in clothing, and to appreciate her personality.

Tova was born in Los Angeles to an Israeli mother and an American father who is a physician but works mainly in research. As the oldest daughter, she always felt a sense of responsibility for her sister and her brother and also to her parents who are constantly

having marital problems. She grew up in the "famous" area of Bel Air, and went to public schools there. She tells me how independent she was from a very early age. She remembers how in preschool, she left after a year since did not "want to play in the sand box any more. I wanted to learn." She claims that, although her mother pushed her to achieve, "she actually had nothing to do with it," because achievement was her own sincere personal wish. She skipped grades because "I already knew how to read and write and I was not going to waste time. This is why I graduated early. I do not want to be restricted." She admits that as a result she always "had problems in every school I went to because I was so young." Living in Bel Air, she "had only old people around "; that is how she grew close to her sister. "We were playing all the time together; we were each other's life; we had each other and our mother." Her brother was born later. She claims that since her parents "did not believe in TV," they never had one at home, and that created a very "educational" atmosphere in the house. She also explains the lack of having other friends from school because "I wanted to learn more than the others." She has played the violin all her life and even wanted to be in an orchestra. In general she did not dedicate time for studying during her high school years, and as a result she received Bs and Cs. Her favorite subject at school was Art History. However, she admits that her final grade for this course was "D." Noticing the questioning expression on my face she explains,

> I did not care at all. It was an amazing class…but I thought that the test was ridiculous. I got confused with the names; I cannot memorize…I loved the class and I still see the teacher and he likes me.

She says that this grade caused confusion at the Admissions Office at Brandeis when she applied here. So she had to explain and "wrote an essay about it; I obviously convinced them." She insists that it was not a rebellious act against her teacher because "I will do almost anything to learn. Instead of spending hours studying for the test, I can look at more pictures I like…I do not try to prove anything." In general, she believes that "I am much more demanding on myself academically…In real life I am not that strong."

She spent first grade in Israel with her parents and also went there for several summers. On her visits she lived with her grandparents, retired high school teachers, in Jerusalem. "They are amazing...they love me…they understand." She has a lot of respect for her mother who taught her Hebrew at home. The fact that now she is now pursuing a career in Hebrew makes her mother "very proud of her." When she came back to California from Israel, she had to go to "remedial class in English." However, with the help of her teacher she moved quickly to upper level classes and skipped grades as she said before. Since then she has become very respectful of teachers in general and of this teacher in particular. She believes that this relationship influenced her to want to become a teacher: "There is no one I respect more than a teacher."

Tova has gone through different stages during the years we have been acquainted. She came as undergraduate to Brandeis and majored in Judaic Studies; then she stayed for a year to complete her Master's degree in the same area. During this year she also went through the training program that I offer for those who wish to become Hebrew teachers. Next year, she will continue her studies in the Ph.D. program in Hebrew literature. She is now 20 years old.

At the time of the interview, Tova was enrolled in three advanced Hebrew courses in our program. Since her first formal instruction in the language was at Brandeis, she believes that she still lacks the formal understanding of its structure: "I try to learn it, but I do not do it properly." However, she admits that this fact "does not bother me too much… I have a general sense of it and it is enough." Although she had extensive knowledge and connection to the language before she came to Brandeis, she admits that she "fell in love with Hebrew literature" here, and according to her it was "by accident." She believes that taking literature courses in Hebrew and a Bible course influenced her and really touched her. According to Tova "these courses showed me …the language that I had not known--the language that I do not see in English. It means a lot to me. It is a big part of me." She explains "that when I read the Tanach [the Old Testament] I can make it part of my life… a dramatic experience." As an example, she describes her experience reading the story about Noah whom God chose to save from the big flood so he could rebuild a better world When she read this story she "was going through a very personal hard time. The question [the main theme of this story], why we are here, gave me a whole new way to look at what am I doing and at my life." Regarding Hebrew literature, she found it very personal, "When I read [it] I feel." Her admiration for Hebrew also originated from her belief that Hebrew is richer than English: "Hebrew writers…are using so much of Jewish history in their writings…. It is a cultural language which I do not think English is." She is amazed by the fact that "Hebrew writers are incredibly expressive. One word can mean so many different things, and you can have all those meanings at the same time." To emphasize this point, she says, "I feel more in Hebrew and I think more in English." As an example, she says that when she discusses how she

learns at Brandeis, she does it in English. However "If I will describe my love for it I will do it in Hebrew.. I am much more emotional in Hebrew…it is a very romantic kind of situation with the language," and she adds, "I can write poetry in Hebrew, I can write prose only in English." She believes that "speaking in Hebrew is much more meaningful" to her. Her feelings towards the language make her cry in poetry class because "it is so real to me…I see pictures, visual pictures, like love…it speaks to me". Tova also believes that her interest in the language is connected to her interest in expression in general: "I am interested in expression in every aspect, language, words, it is all a kind of therapeutic session to understand expression. This is why I am studying Hebrew literature". In her opinion, Hebrew fits the Israeli people because "they are much more emotional, passionate people as opposed to Americans who could care less."

In terms of her current level, she knows that she is advanced, but "my ability is superior."

As a result of studying Hebrew literature, Tova discovered that her mother is interested in it too, and now "we have a great time discussing it and we respect each other's ideas and different perspectives." She cannot have the same relationships with her father since he cannot speak Hebrew, although he used to understand it. Since he left her mother "he understands now less and less."

She has not changed her mind about grades since high school, and although they are "good, "she does not care. What matters to her is the academic negotiation with her professors: " I take classes of professors I like; I write papers so I can give back something to the teacher, a new idea, a new perspective, that is all I want to do." She admits that she cares what the professors think of her academic ability. According to her,

even her parents "never cared about the grades." Nonetheless, she is concerned about her achievements compared to other learners. That is the reason she hesitates to go and study in Israel "Here I am one of the top students and there I do not know. I really want to be a top student."

It was interesting to hear about her connection to Judaism. She claims that she "feels incredibly Jewish. I can not explain this Jewishness, I have never been in temple. I know a lot of Jewish history. I do not know why I have this connection." Instead of spending time in temple on Yom Kippur, she prefers to fast and sit at home and think about the meaning of the holiday to her.

She clearly sees her future involving Hebrew on a personal level: "My children definitely need to speak Hebrew." She is not sure if her future partner would also need to know the language. She admits that on this issue she is "divided." She tells me how difficult it was for her when her ex-boyfriend did not understand how the word "AHAVA" [love in Hebrew] means a lot more that the word "love" in English because that is "so overused". She also sees the use of Hebrew in terms of her future career. She would love to teach Hebrew and hopes "to do it as a life long thing." She has as an ideal the improvement of the teaching of Hebrew in the States. Since she had wonderful experiences learning it, she hopes others could enjoy it too. She easily gets upset when she talks about students who do not cherish their opportunity to learn: "I have a hard time teaching them because they do not want to be here." One of her greatest experiences and responsibilities so far has been teaching Hebrew at an experimental afternoon Hebrew school in Cambridge. She loves the fact that both the parents and the students "really want to know Hebrew."

spending time in temple on Yom Kippur, she prefers to fast and sit at home and think about the meaning of the holiday to her.

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She admits that during her years at Brandeis she went through a character change from being the popular girl that "every one wants to date" to being a serious graduate student, who enjoys living by herself, cleaning and cooking, and having "control over my life." She admits that she would like to find someone to share the "excess baggage" that she has; however, she "would not do it out of convenience or for the sake of sharing only."

I thanked Tova for talking to me and being so open and honest. I knew that this conversation could not have happened before. Only our long relationship and our truly mutual respect for each other made her trust me and open herself to me. After she left my office, I had to admit that this 20-year-old student taught me a lot. As an Israeli, I always tend to believe that Israeli youth struggle to mature faster than any other people their age. This interviewee showed me that other young adults, even from Bel Air, can become mature at such an early age.

e. **Billy –** (Advanced learner *of Hebrew*)

I met Billy for the first time in the Kosher cafeteria at the University, during the time of year that our staff tries to organize what we call a " Hebrew table", i.e., once a week faculty members go to the cafeteria to meet with students so they can practice their Hebrew conversation skills with us. Because of my lack of time I rarely go there. In addition, I do not find it not a very successful undertaking, since most of our Hebrew students, who eat Kosher food, meet there anyway, and often prefer to speak among themselves without the presence of a teacher. However, that day I was invited by one of our students who helped to organize it, so I could not refuse. To make sure that I was not the only faculty member there, I brought another teacher with me, who was happy to "eat for free." As I expected, no one but us sat at our table, although students approached us constantly to greet us. Just when were about to leave, a short, studious-looking young man, with dark hair and glasses approached us, holding books as well as his tray and asked: "Is this the Hebrew Table?" Not wishing to disappoint him, we decided to sit again and let him practice his Hebrew. I noticed that he seemed unusually polite and well mannered. We did not expect much since he told us that he was in his 3rd semester in

Hebrew. To our surprise, his Hebrew was PERFECT. Not even one mistake!! It was clearly a phenomenon that we rarely see in our program. He spoke about his class experience and told us about the variety of other languages he had studied before he came to Brandeis.

I was happy to find him in my intermediate level class, and I knew that I would enjoy teaching him. Although he did not speak much, his writing was as perfect as his speaking and his grades were excellent. He always asked the "right" questions, and his presentations were of high intellectual quality.

At the time of the interview, he was participating in our advanced conversation class, in which he hoped to improve his speaking ability.

Billy was born in Massachusetts. However, at the age six he moved to a small town in New Hampshire. His parents decided to move there because "they preferred nature, fewer people…it was not that they had to relocate for a job." As the only child of a furniture mover and a city clerk, both of whom spoke "only English," he was not exposed to foreign language until the age of 12. Then as an after-school activity he had the opportunity to study Spanish for half an hour a week. His teacher, who was from Ecuador, "was teaching us to say 'hello' and 'good bye' and stuff like that." The idea behind this half hour-session was to share collections such as stamps or coins using the language, but he admits that "I never bothered to collect…So I figured, I will concentrate on the language," although, at first it did not interest him much. He also mentions the fact that even when he started French (the language in which he is majoring at Brandeis), it was not interesting at all to him; and he was about the drop the course when "something clicked and I continued to study it." The way he learned French was by pronouncing the

words out loud to himself, reading books, and writing. The only foreign language used in his family is by his grandmother who speaks Sicilian "with her sister." He claims that he had "a regular childhood," in which his favorite activity was swimming. "It is fun for me to be in the water." As an asthmatic child it also helped him to develop his lungs. After school he used to gather with his neighborhood friends and "bike to their houses."

In his first year of high school, his parents got divorced and he stayed with his mother. He does not see much of his father; however, he was close to his grandmother whom he visited every weekend. He misses these visits and tries to visit her during breaks.

As a child, he did not like to read much: "When I was a kid I used to read half a book at a time, like Hardy Boys or some adventure." However, in high school he became more interested in reading, "focusing more on academics." He continues to read mainly books on Jewish history and Judaism, both for his course work and his outside interests. He is currently enjoying reading a book by Durshowitz that analyzes different trends in Judaism in the United States. This type of reading led him, at the age 13, to convert to Judaism from Catholicism:

> When I was in the ninth grade, we began studying the Holocaust and its different effects on Jewish people, so I began studying on my own, like who were the Jews and what their religion is, and why people disliked them and so when I was 13, I approached a Rabbi in the temple which was nearest to my house and met with him and my parents and we discussed everything and we began studying.

I was really curious to hear how his parents reacted to this move, but according to Billy, since they were non-practicing Catholics, they did not have "a strong reaction either way." He believes that "they figured it was my decision and I guess they thought as

long as I believed in something, they were happy that I found something I wanted to follow through, they were very willing to bring me to the temple to study." He got to meet other Jewish kids in the temple because "there was no one in my school who was Jewish." Before Brandeis these were his only Jewish friends. He participated in youth groups sponsored by Haddassah, a Jewish organization, and the synagogue.

What attracts Billy to Judaism, among other things, is the fact that "it is very logical" and in addition " the holidays bring people together." These two elements are easy for him "to incorporate into my life." He claims that, unlike Catholics who try to dictate everything by

> not answering , just giving information, it was always this is it, do not answer, Judaism is straight forward and that is what I like about it, and that is why I can incorporate it in my life and make it part of what I am doing now and where I wanted to go.

He does not see the search for meaning in his life as resulting from his parents' divorce: "I decided to convert before it happened."

He never felt odd about his conversion until he got to Brandeis: "Everything was quite normal; I really thought it was fine; it was something I wanted to do." However, at Brandeis, he met students who come "from this long line of Judaism," and they go to their families on the holidays. "On Passover everyone's going to their grandmother or grand- father's house and I go to my Rabbi's house." At Brandeis, for the first time he also met Orthodox Jews, who do not recognize him as Jewish because a Reform Rabbi converted him. He did not choose Brandeis because of its large Jewish community. It was not even his first choice, but he wanted to be in a city and he was thinking of Tufts or Brown. When he came to visit Brandeis he met students and professors and he loved the

campus so much "it won him over." Billy declares that he is very happy at Brandeis: "I like it a lot. I can not imagine myself anywhere else."

He was very eager to learn Hebrew because he had not learned it during his conversion process. In this process he was required to go through the basic stages which included being called to the "bimah"(the altar in the temple) to say a couple of blessings and to be welcomed. However, he had to read them by transliteration. So he was excited that by learning the language he could read the prayers in Hebrew. He saw Hebrew as "something that would help me in the long run." He confessed that the fact that his friends from the Jewish youth group knew Hebrew influenced his decision to continue with the language at Brandeis. He says that he has never regretted his decision both to convert and to study Hebrew. As an Israeli, I was amazed to hear that he views Israel as his "homeland". Noticing my questioning expression, he explains:

> The way Judaism looks at it, once you convert, it is like someone who was born Jewish. In fact if you were to carry it to its ultimate extreme, you are never supposed to speak of the experience. I consider myself Jewish and Israel is my homeland.

Although he has never yet been in Israel, he definitely wants to go there. He says that to him, "The funny thing is, it is almost that I knew before I began meeting with my Rabbi that I would like to become Jewish, before going to Israel I could imagine myself living there." Although he does not think about it seriously, "It is an option."

He first started learning Hebrew using tapes, but they did not help him much, although he learned some phrases. His formal education in the language is basically in the Brandies Hebrew program. It is clear that Billy has a talent for languages, not because he is majoring in French, but because he is also studying German and Yiddish at the same

time together with Hebrew. He admits that when he learns a language he is "obsessed" about it. It needs to be prefect. He doesn't believe he is talented at all; he claims that the fact that he knows French grammar better than English grammar is because he has had more formal education in the subject.

With all his success in Hebrew and his appreciation of Judaism, he finds French, as an academic subject, "What interests me the most." When he came to Brandeis, he was placed in the advanced level French course and "it was easy for me to explore the literature and speak the language, and I was hoping to use it in a business situation… maybe as an interpreter, working with a company with French-speaking people…maybe a teacher".

As expected, he is an excellent student: "All my three semesters I have been on the dean's list." However, he does not get excited when a B or a C sneaks in. Usually it happens either when he recognizes that he did not put in enough effort or because "I was not interested." He admits that he needs to be interested in a subject in order to perform well. "That is what motivates me." He does not like math: "Numbers beyond subtraction and addition, I lose it," he says smiling, although in high school it was one of his favorite subjects, maybe because they dealt mostly with the general concepts and not with the details.

He admits that Hebrew was more of a challenge for him than the other languages he had studied, mainly because of the alphabet. For him, that was the "biggest barrier." He explains that,

> when I look up something written in English or French, I just glance at it, and I can understand; when I look at something written in Hebrew, I have to kind of stare, look over it and figure things out.

He uses flash cards to study Hebrew vocabulary. Usually he likes to read the English translation and then the word in Hebrew. He also writes it to practice the spelling. While in French, he can "read and retain the material," in Hebrew "I have to get more involved in the process." He also tries to find Israelis in order to speak Hebrew with them and to train himself to think in Hebrew during Hebrew class. He believes that he can study better when "I hear words in my thoughts." For him, Hebrew did not seem as natural as the other languages he had learned, maybe because he started it at an older age or maybe because it is a "difficult" language. He admits that the irregular verbs "get on his nerves once in a while." However, he does not see any problems with learning the other elements of the language, although they are hard to learn. He is more active in his French class: "In Hebrew, I feel that I do not say what I want to say just because I do have to take that extra time. I know it is not a good thing, but I do not want to make mistakes out loud." He recognizes that this perfectionism is bad, but "it goes back to when I always wanted to do it perfectly or not at all." It is hard for him to accept people's judgment that he is doing well. In his mind, he compares his Hebrew abilities with his French abilities and finds them lacking. In terms of his feeling towards Hebrew, he says, "I feel very happy studying Hebrew, to hear and speak the language and it is also has to do with when I get grades back… that I really worked and I have done really well." His commitment to Hebrew makes him want to take a Hebrew course every semester: "It is something that I enjoy studying and taking it as far as I can while I am here." He does not think about using Hebrew in his future career; right now he seems to enjoy his love for the language and his excitement: "Hebrew is such an interesting language …I like the

sound, I like when I found the Israeli Radio [on the web] I was so excited…it is a pleasure." He claims that he believes that in general "each language has something to offer that can be expressed only in that one language." He admits that he is frustrated when he is with friends who do not know Hebrew and he can not translate the meaning of expressions in Hebrew for them. In addition, he loves the fact that in Hebrew " when you look at the word, there always will be a root and I try to figure out the word." He loves to listen to Israeli songs and watch Israeli movies, and he believes that this can enrich his vocabulary. He understands that many elements in the culture are sad; however, he prefers the more "happy" cultural aspects. In terms of his level he believes that "if I was dropped all of a sudden in Israel, I could survive."

His Jewish awareness made him decide to study Yiddish, which he finds very interesting in terms of " the Jews and their relation to languages." The recent movement to revive Yiddish really excites him and is also "another way for me to enrich my experience about a language which is sort of frozen."

To summarize our conversation, he admits that he loves Israelis because they are "very straight forward," and "Hebrew is wonderful, nice to hear, but also so frustrating, but it is all worth it."

When I thanked Billy for sharing his story with me, he used this opportunity to thank me for teaching him. After he left, I sat for a while in my office trying to understand how this young person has so much courage and energy to change his life, and pursue his personal interests both academically and spiritually. No need to say how much I admire him for that.

f. Brice- (Advanced learner of *Chinese)*

The interview with Brice was not planned. It was a Monday afternoon when I realized that, for the second time P, an advanced Chinese student, would not show up for his interview. A bit upset, I knocked on the door of my colleague, the Chinese instructor, for advice. She was conversing in Chinese with a student. Listening to my complaints, she suddenly suggested that I interview Brice, the student who sat in her office. Brice did not inquire much; it seemed that he trusted his instructor's judgment and a few minutes later he appeared smiling in my office. I felt that he was different from the other students in our program. I realized that what struck me was the way he was dressed. He looked like the typical handsome blonde California students I saw on my visits to UCLA. He wore large army pants with a batik T-shirt under an army jacket that matched the color of his blue eyes, and the color of the necklaces he had around his neck. It was the "hippie" type necklaces that reminded me of the one I used to wear in my high school years. While opening my calendar to look for a suitable interview time, he said, "I have time now; do you mind if we talk now?" His openness and willingness to share his story and his thoughts amazed me, and I immediately felt eager to talk with him. I figured that since it was not a planned interview, we would just spend a short time together before he left to his other activities. When the interview ended, we realized that we had been talking for more than two hours and we both admitted that we could have prolonged our conversation. From the moment he sat on the chair, leaning towards the tape recorder, he started talking vividly, pouring out his words, almost without breathing, as if he were afraid to leave his story unfinished. Many times he looked to me for assurance that I understood the meaning of what he was telling me, using facial expressions and hand gestures to explain himself better. From time to time he would shake his head and say,

"oh my God," to describe his emotions. Without noticing, I found myself swept into his story, living each detail, wanting to know more and more. As a bright young man, Brice not only told his story, but from time to time analyzed the events in his life, commenting on possible explanations for his behavior. I was fascinated by the way he was willing to look at himself; it seemed as if it was not new to him, as if he is constantly did this self-examination.

Brice does not see anything special about his childhood. He grew up in Rockland, which is a suburb of New York City, as the only child of "typical Jewish parents and grandparents" who wished him to become a doctor. He accepted their wishes as part of their "American Jewish culture" and, since he had no objections he "went along with it." His describes his family as middle class Jewish; his father is a Spanish teacher in a local high school, and his mother is a housewife and very "simple minded," a "simple person" who "does her own things." In spite of his father's profession, Brice never learned Spanish from him at home, nor did his father see it as important. Languages were not Brice's passion in school. "Like everyone else" he studied Spanish, but never really took it seriously. He did not even continue with it in his senior year. He was sent to Hebrew afternoon school to receive his formal Jewish education, but, as expected, he hated it. While telling about it, he even seems angry that his time was wasted by such an activity. Looking back, he does not find any sense to this school:

> I hated Hebrew school. It was terrible. They taught us how to read Hebrew, but not to understand; it was only for prayers. It was useless; who came up with this philosophy, I have no idea. It turned us all off. It was like a punishment. It was like 5-6 hours per week. It took part of my childhood away.

He even blames the Hebrew school education for his distance from Judaism. "I got disinterested and lost touch with my Jewish identity. I did not see it as spiritually fulfilling....my parents obligated me to go to temple. I hated it."

He describes himself as an excellent student. He graduated high school at the top of his class and is very proud that he was the valedictorian. He explains that his satisfaction originated from the fact that he was never pushed by his parents to study hard; it was his own ambition: "I told myself that I have to get the best grades; because if I did not, I would not have the opportunities." He did not have to work too hard for it and he also had time to participate on the tennis team and the golf team. What is interesting to note is his perspective on this issue. He calls his straight A's "superficial" since he was not really interested in any of the subjects he had learned. In terms of his social life, he claimed that during most of his high school years he mostly kept to himself. He had only one good friend, and even in sports, he chose to play individual sports so that he would not be involved in a group. The big change in this respect came during his senior year in high school. For the first time he had a girlfriend and "it was a big deal." According to him, this change opened him and let him gain a lot of confidence in himself and he even began to rebel. "I became a little bit weird in how my friends saw me. I was not that quiet little kid any more." It was interesting to learn that his girlfriend was a Chinese American, who was born in the United States. Through his girlfriend, Chinese culture was opened to him. He acknowledged the fact that he became interested in learning the language and its culture, and indeed he learned few words and phrases. Remembering his attitude about learning Spanish and Hebrew, I wondered if it was his girlfriend who made him so interested in Chinese. I was surprised to hear that he was attracted to Chinese

because it is a "language from another side of the world" and that the Chinese culture and Buddhism appealed to him because it was " culture and not a religion." He claims that as an American Jew, he had to be involved in the religion and that he hated this part of the Jewish culture. Although he loved the culture, he felt obligated to practice the religion as well. Therefore, the fact that in his girlfriend's home the culture was more emphasized really attracted him. More than that, he felt that he could identify with this culture, because, in a way, it was similar to the way he had grown up, with the same family values, and the same ambition to succeed in life. His girlfriend was pushed to become a doctor.

He calls "ironic" his decision to come to Brandeis for his college education (since 65% of Brandeis students are Jewish). Since he was an excellent student who loved science, he thought that the Brandeis pre-med program would fit his needs. In addition, he admits that the fact that the school "gave me a lot of money" helped him decide to come to Brandeis. When he first came he felt very comfortable, since the "suburban little school" was exactly like his hometown and it fitted him. He worked hard for two years as a pre- med student to complete all his required course work successfully. For the language requirement, he studied Spanish because he needed "an easy class" to alleviate his difficult schedule. However, during his first two years of studying at Brandeis, an unexpected change in his plans occurred. As a freshman, he had participated in a USAM class (a University seminar course, that is part of the university requirements) in which Zen philosophy and Buddhism was taught. Brice loved it and he continued studying Chinese philosophy the following semester. The more deeply he got involved in learning about these topics, the more interested he became in them. This process of learning made

him realize how Chinese philosophy relates to his personal life and " he felt comfortable with it", since "Buddhist viewpoints flow smoothly." As an example, he describes his golf experience in which, with the help of Chinese philosophy, he understood that the mechanical and the technical elements of the game are worthless if you do not use the "Zone" that requires the player to relax, breathe, to trust the body, and let the game be more natural: "Just let it go, have fun; let your body do it; don't think. You enjoy the trees around you, the air and the blue sky, and the ball comes closer to the hole."

After a year and a half in college, he was a changed person. He became more involved in learning about Chinese culture, dropped Spanish, and started courses in Chinese language and Chinese landscape painting. Brice realized that he really "hated medical school," and that he "had been repressing it for so long," although he was good at it, but he really "loves the Chinese stuff." Therefore he thought, "Why not do it completely? Why waste a single moment of time doing something I do not love? Why even bother." Within a period of two weeks, he changed his academic concentration by creating an independent major in Chinese, and broke with his old girlfriend, who was following this future joint path to medical school. He even turned down his early acceptance to medical school, an honor that only five Brandeis pre-medical students had achieved.

It was very moving to hear how he regrets having hurt his girlfriend and his parents. He spoke of this for at least three minutes, crying as he did so. He has a deep appreciation for his parents who do not approve of his decision to reject medical school, but, on the other hand, have never tried to stop him from doing what he thought was good for himself, including changing his wardrobe, wearing nail polish without even thinking

about what anybody thought," and even allowed him to spend a summer at Berkeley. The idea of spending a summer in the "most liberal place in the country" had drawn objections from his parents who were afraid that he intended to join a cult, but still they gave him the freedom to do it. For him it became one of the happiest times in his life. "It was the most wonderful summer." He enjoyed the air, the academic life, and the diversity of the people whom he met while living in a coop run by students, a building with "writing and pink murals, free art." He admits that this experience opened him, and enriched his formal and informal education, including introducing to him to watching foreign movies.

At Berkeley he studied more Chinese that, according to him, is his "door to Asia." In his romantic manner, he declared Chinese as his "first love" in the process of discovering the new language, its culture, and other oriental places such as Japan and Korea. As I mentioned earlier, Brian believes that the Chinese language and its philosophy are very human and that he was able to learn from studying the language "what it is to be a human being" as well as to understand "how deep and amazing life can be." The whole notion of viewing the world " through other eyes" not only can enrich one academically, but also contributes to the learner's development of his or her human skills. Brice's human approach to the language makes him want to develop mainly his speaking skill; therefore, he always finds opportunities to do so, by going to Chinatown to speak with the people there as well as with his Chinese friends. The ability to converse in another language makes him "feel good." He does not ignore the importance of the other language skills, but he believes that without speaking, the learning of the language would be boring and tedious. He developed his own method of learning in which in order

to remember a word, a character, he not only writes it several times, but also says it aloud so he can "feel the shape," so the meaning of the word will be more integrated in him. His ideal learning method is by concentrating, memorizing the visual form of the word and letting it "sink in." Unlike English, in which the words are "artificial," since there is a need to decode an "equation," in the Chinese language, as "the feeling is expressed in the style of the character. ...When you write the word 'rain' it feels like rain really." He criticizes himself for sometimes memorizing the romanization of the Chinese word. For him it is like thinking in English rather than in Chinese. He loves calligraphy for it's "aesthetic values and its philosophy." This appreciation for the aesthetic aspects of the language makes him eager to study Japanese, since he finds it even more aesthetically aware than Chinese.

To enhance his Chinese language ability, he plans to spend the summer in China, not in a regular academic program that would force him to follow a rigid framework, but in a program which is located near the Siberian border. In the fall he is going to spend time studying in Beijing during his semester abroad. He chose this summer program since it is more culturally than language oriented. He needs more "freedom to talk to people, to go around" and he can choose his own study plan and work with a tutor. He mainly wants to concentrate on philosophy, acupuncture, Tai-chi, and so on. His interest in the current political aspects of China is minimal; however, he feels that he needs to know more about the government that tries "to erase Chinese culture, the Chinese I fell in love with." Since culture is also the focus of his Chinese course at Brandeis, he prefers it to other programs, such as Harvard's and Wellesley's, which perhaps have better reputations.

The changes that have occurred in Brice's life through the Chinese experience have led him to join the Association of Asian American students. When he joined it seemed strange to the Asian students to find him in their organization, but slowly they accepted him, a fact that makes him very proud. He also admits that he has a very powerful need to experiment in other areas that he might be good at. For example, he joined a theater group. To his surprise, he was chosen for a part in a play. Talking about this experience with his eyes shining, he tells me how in his part he had to portray a rapist. It was very difficult for him and he went through a process in which he had to understand the character he was playing. It was interesting to note how willing he was to experiment with a scene in the play in which he had to kiss a girl, and for him kissing someone whom he does not love seemed strange, but he let it go because it was natural to the role, and he felt great about his ability to be able to perform it well. He believes that his individuality came out in this experiment; therefore he enrolled in an acting class this semester as well as in a Chinese literature course. This was the first time for him to try literature. "I never saw myself reading a book; this is my first time really enjoying books." He acknowledges that his eagerness about studying Chinese opened him to dare in other areas as well.

When I asked him how he perceives his Jewish identity, he answered, "It is a very relevant aspect in my life; I am actually Jewish, but religiously I am disconnected like so many others." He identifies with many ideas that are expressed in The Jew and the Lotus (a book and a movie that describe the encounter between Rabbis and the Dalai Lama), saying "I read a lot about it and there are a lot of people in this country who are looking for it[Buddhisim]. A new viewpoint." He is only sorry that his parents can not understand

him. Although they still let him do whatever he wants, they are concerned, especially his mother, because he is their only son, and they want the best for him.

He is amazed to hear from me how I encourage my two sons to study Chinese in school and he commented, " It's wonderful, oh my God.... I envy your family. God knows where I would be today if I had a family that encouraged me."

He does not regret the fact that he came to Brandeis and spent two years doing something he did not like:

> I do not regret coming here; I had a very good time; it's been the right place for me...people say I wasted two years out of my life doing biology, chemistry...but I actually needed to go through with it to realize that I did not like it. So no regrets.

He definitely sees the Chinese language in his future, although he knows that he still has a lot to learn: "I can get by with Chinese; I can have conversations. I feel I am starting now. I cannot think in Chinese." He hopes to master the language in the future and to learn more so he can integrate it more into his life, however he still does not know how. He is still living the process of growing and developing this dimension in himself.

I must confess that I was fascinated by Brice's story and came to admire his courage to change his life, his destiny, and to confront all those who tried to prevent him from doing so. Standing at my office door saying good bye, I suddenly felt very close to him. and lamented the fact that I would not be able to witness the progress of his development. I asked him to come and tell me, upon his return from China, the continuation of his story. He enthusiastically agreed, smiled and said, "I would love to." Then he turned to leave and paused for a moment asking quietly, "Actually, who are

you?" I gave him my card and briefly introduced myself and he nodded his head and promised to come back.

g. Annie- (Advanced learner of *Chinese*)

Annie is the only female who studied at the advanced level in Chinese this semester. She is an Asian, and came to my office wearing blue jeans, a big sweater, and large glasses. She sat politely and waited for my instructions. What struck me the most was the mixture of obvious confidence and politeness in her behavior. Her soft voice and her wonderful ability to articulate herself in English were very enjoyable to listen to. Even her habit of frequently touching the corner of her glasses did not interfere with the smoothness and fluency that I felt during this interview. Her well-constructed sentences and her careful choice of words made the interview sound very academic. Sometimes I felt that Annie talked about herself as if she were talking about someone else.

The first issue she wanted to emphasize was the fact that she is studying Chinese by her own choice. She had fulfilled her university language requirement before coming to Brandeis by studying AP courses in Spanish. Annie was born in Taiwan and came to the USA when she was three. She always spoke Mandarin with her parents at home in Queens, New York where she was surrounded by a large Asian community. However, "I never learned how to read and write and that is one of the reasons I am taking it [Chinese] here." She is majoring in history and anthropology at Brandeis and believes that she is a very good student. Also she considers herself to have been a very good student in her high school years as well. She studied in the public schools and describes herself as a learner who had many interests and really needed her parents' advice in terms of her

concentration: "I was jumping all over the place." She also has a passion for sports such as swimming and soccer. Being a good student in science and math, she decided to enroll in these courses at Brandeis. However, "I took physics and that sort of turned me of against science." As a senior at Brandeis, she believes she received a wonderful education in the areas that she was studying, but she misses science and thinks about going to a graduate school that would prepare her to become a math teacher.

In Queens, she grew up with a group of school friends from mixed backgrounds and she still keeps in touch with them. One of her friends is majoring in French and another friend from a Chinese background is majoring in Spanish and Italian. She believes that she was lucky to be exposed to foreign language learning from the very early years of her life, when she learned English at school. That is how she explains her success with languages. In her opinion, in order to study a foreign language, in addition to this exposure, one has to have an ability to learn a new language: "Certain people pick up languages easier than other people." Growing up in an environment where Chinese and English were used made it "easier" for her. Even her brother, who was born in the USA, has a hard time picking up Chinese. He used to go to Chinese afternoon school and stopped because he disliked it. "He has tough time with languages in general. He can understand, but can not really speak the language." It is the same with her cousins who still go to a Chinese afternoon school.

She emphasizes her connections to her home and her parents during the interview. Her parents helped her make many decisions during her high school years and this relationship made her choose Brandeis "because a couple of friends go to school here and it's close to home."

In terms of her identity, it is possible to feel how Annie is really searching to find the right way to define herself. It seems that the Chinese language and not the tradition is the factor that defines her Chinese identity. In the interview she declares that she is an Asian American. " I am a Chinese, but I grew up here…I am not very traditionally Chinese. I identify more with American culture." Although she celebrates the Chinese holidays with her parents, she is aware that she is less connected to this culture than they: "I do celebrate the holidays, my parents celebrate them, but I do not know if I would in twenty years, or so." In the future she would love her children to know about the holidays, but she doubts that "she would actually do it." Learning a Chinese language seems to be the door to her Asian world, both in terms of her immediate surroundings and her parents. She says that it is her desire and need to communicate with her parents. Learning Chinese "was really for me, for my parents to be able to communicate, because my mom, actually both my parents, speak more Chinese than English. They are able to communicate in English but not very well." She also mentions how her mother was very happy about her decision to study Chinese without the need to push her into it. "My mom loves it; she thinks it's good and she likes that I decided to take it and she did not make me take it." She even admits that if she discovers any information that is new to her on the language or the culture "I would ask my Mom about it, and that brings my mom a little bit closer."

I it is clear that Annie would like to make an effort to keep her Chinese identity because she "does not want to be completely American." She hopes that the language will preserve this part of her identity and will help her " to pass it down to my children one day." She feels sorry for her other Asian friends and even her brother "who are very

Americanized, who do not speak the language; I do not want to be like that." In general she seems to believe that learning a language 'is one of the ways to learn about another culture."

Coming from a Chinese-speaking family clearly gave her an advantage over other students in the class. However, it was not easy for her. She started at the third semester level and she admits that she learned a lot in this course; besides writing and reading, she enriched her vocabulary. She started in her freshmen year, but stopped after a semester and, now in her last semester, has gone back to studying it. She actually needed to prepare herself for this semester, so the prior semester she audited a Chinese class because "I wanted to refresh myself after two years of not taking Chinese." She recognizes the fact that her level of Chinese is different in all skills; although her speaking and understanding ability are better, she thinks that her writing is not as good. Therefore, she tries to control the use of vocabulary when she produces an essay. She usually uses the list of words given her by the teacher or in the specific text she is reading. The fun part of the language for her is her ability to talk to people: "It's more fun to talk to people than to read"; in her opinion the opportunities to learn about the culture are better through conversation than reading about it. She never felt any crisis or difficulty that made her abandon the learning process. Her familiarity made her comfortable most of the time and she admits that she "loves the language."

She has never returned to Taiwan although she hopes to do so with her parents. She also does not have plans to use the language in her future career. So far she knows that she will always use it to communicate with her parents, but if she had another opportunity to use it, such as in the area of international business, it would be "great."

It was interesting to note her "patriotic" feelings towards the language when I told her that my sons are studying Chinese. She admitted, "It is great; it makes me happy… You feel like Chinese is appealing to other people…you take pride in it." But then she added, "If it was not Chinese it would also be great." She was also impressed by the language abilities of her classmates who "know a lot of vocabulary and have very good writing skills…really good pronunciation."

What she misses in classes is mostly the exposure to more culture. She feels that her parents represent their own Chinese culture, which is not enough for her in terms of representing the culture altogether. She feels that China for her is like "another foreign country," since she does not have relatives there.

When the interview ended, I felt as if it were not completed. I was concerned that we did not cover all the topics I had expected. However, when I read the transcript I realized that it was not the interview that made me feel the sense of lack of conversation. Rather, it was Annie herself whose way of expressing her identity was never very clear. It made me realize that it might be the first time she had ever really talked about it and she still may be in the process of clarifying it to herself.

h. **Paul –** (Advanced learner of *Chinese)*

I tried several times to interview Paul. When I had come to his class asking for volunteers, he was the first one to agree and immediately suggested the date and the time for our meeting. At first glance he did not look to me like a typical Chinese learner in our program. With leather jacket, messed up hair, he looked to me as if he had just got out of bed. He appeared somewhat "spaced out." He missed our meetings three times, and I had to call him twice to ask why did not show up. He came up with a variety of reasons, such

as that he was sick, had overslept, or sprained his ankle in a soccer game. His teacher was upset by his behavior, and I was concerned that I would not have enough students to interview. I had already found another student to replace him as an interviewee, when he suddenly showed up in my office, apologizing and expressing his interest in being interviewed "like the rest of my classmates." Since I did not want him to feel rejected, and, after all, he had been the first to volunteer, I decided to interview him. It was a short interview in which most of the time he sat on a chair rocking on the two back legs, constantly asking for clarification of my questions. I must admit I enjoyed his story and I felt sorry to not be able to interview him more extensively.

Peter was exposed to Chinese culture and language before he came to Brandeis. He grew up in Irvine, California in a middle-class English-speaking family. He "had Chinese friends" whom he believes "kind of got me interested in learning." In his hometown the Asian community is large, and he is involved with people who belong to this community. Since he wanted to understand what his friends were saying in Chinese, he taught himself how to speak by listening to them and asking them questions. In his senior year of high school he decided to take courses in Chinese at the University of California at Irvine, and when he came to Brandeis, he immediately entered the intermediate level course. Although he had also studied French in high school, he did not continue it in college. He claims that as a result of his exposure to the spoken language, his Chinese "accent and tonality is so good" and he also believes that the Chinese spoken language is not difficult at all. Paul even finds similarities to English, and therefore "it is easy to pick up....because it goes: subject-verb-object." The writing, on the other hand, was very difficult for him at the beginning, but now, as an advanced student "most of the

components within the character you have just seen, so you just kind of imagine." The fact that he can speak and communicate in Chinese makes him feel special, and "cool" and even "unique." His connection to the language also came through his former Taiwanese girlfriend. Since they "spent a lot of time in her house," he learned the culture and the Taoist philosophy that he adores. This philosophy for him is "the way all things happen according to a way and you also let yourself flow with the way…more relaxed….not setting yourself to get stressed out by things in your mind and dealing with things the way they come. It's more natural." Such a philosophy fits his personality. He sees a direct connection between the language and its philosophy. The fact that most of the characters are taken from nature, for example, makes both the philosophy and language very simple for him. It was not a dramatic change to start living according to this philosophy; it all came very naturally to him.

He laments the fact that "most people have this weird prejudice against Chinese [the language]…they do not even deal with this," and he would like to share his experience and tell them that "when you get down to it , and when you take it step by step, it is not a big deal at all," When he came to Brandeis, he intended to major in biology. As a high school student he was strong in science and, in addition, he spent a summer at Brandeis in its high school program, working in the biology lab. When Brandeis offered him a Merit Scholarship, he decided to come because of his previous experience here and the fact that he wanted to be far from home. Although he had hoped to be a biology major, he realized that he preferred to major in Asian Studies and Politics. His parents did not object to this change: "They are fine with that. I pretty much have autonomy."

As a politics major, he is very interested in the current political situation in China, mainly because it has become very "violent and the government has very little control, especially in the countryside…it is no fault of the culture; it's the government." He admits that he does not see himself trying to correct the situation there: "There is really nothing I can do even if I try." In spite of this, he intends to spend this summer in China. What also fascinates him is China's history, tradition, and its antiquity as compared to America.. "My town was founded in 1975...all of America has not that much history…when I go to China I will be in a culture that is thousands of years old." He also admires China for its "real culture" and in his opinion "they are strong; they know their culture." For him, the interesting part of Chinese culture is the fact that the tradition is tied to agriculture, meaning nature. Chinese literature does not interest him; he will study classical Chinese only, "to look at old documents for historical purposes." In terms of the use of Chinese in his future, he does not have any clear plans; however, he hopes to be "in some sort of job that involves Chinese," but he does not have a clue of how exactly this will happen.

He criticizes Chinese classes for being too slow and dull. He claims that, since he studies by talking to people, he learns more outside class. He speaks with a "cashier he works with in the cafeteria," and at home, in California, he does "language exchange" by speaking English to Chinese and they speak Chinese to him. In addition, "There is a lady from Szechwan there who is trying to become a citizen; so I have been tutoring her."

Paul believes that he is different, and that his group of friends is "eclectic and interesting and like to do strange things," and their personal taste and clothing is different from the norms. Nonetheless, I found him to be a very realistic and pragmatic person who

does not view the Chinese language and Chinese philosophy in a romantic context. He admits that his current engagement with Chinese is good for him now; however, it might change in the future. For example, "I would like to find a religion someday. I will probably take up the religion of my wife, because I do believe in God. Now I stick with Taoism." During the interview, Paul gave me the impression that he hopes Chinese as a language and a way of life will stay with him forever. However, he recognizes his needs as priorities and is ready to make changes in his views if needed. His ability to be so clear and precise on how this issue fits his life gave me a sense of maturity that some of his classmates lack. Maybe the fact that he has lived the language and the culture for so many years diminished the level of enthusiasm that I found in others. Nevertheless, this interview reinforces for me the notion that learning Chinese is mostly a means for personal expression rather than an academic discipline.

i. Eli - (Advanced learner of *Chinese*)

I knew Eli long before I visited his Chinese class. As a graduate of a Hebrew day school, he came to my office to seek exemption from the language requirement. He wore a baseball cap in place of the "kippa"(a skullcap) which Jewish Orthodox background requires. With his somewhat unclear speech and slight stutter, he enthusiastically told me about a year he had spent in Israel during high school. It is a common phenomenon for Jewish teenagers who study at Jewish day school to spend a year in Israel. In order to

make it easier for them, they travel as a group and study most of their subjects in English. However, Eli chose not to join these groups; rather, he decided to live with an Israeli family and to study in a regular Israeli high school, in which he studied all subjects in Hebrew and lived in a total Israeli environment. Somehow, it was hard for me to imagine this confused looking young man as so independent and so adventuresome. In his first semester at Brandeis, he participated in one of our advanced Hebrew language courses in which he did very well, as might be expected. He also inquired about the possibility of working as a tutor for oral skills, but we did not approve his request because of his unclear speech. While studying Hebrew, he often used to stop in my office, either for a chat or to ask assistance of all sorts, from wanting to use my stapler to asking my academic advice. Knowing that he had left our Hebrew program, I always wondered why I still saw him in the hallway. When I stopped one day to inquire, I discovered that he had decided to study Chinese. From time to time I stopped him to ask how his Chinese skills were developing. With shining eyes he always told me how difficult and wonderful it was for him; often he complained how hard it was for him to succeed.

Therefore, I was surprised to find that he moved up to the advanced level course in Chinese and I was really eager to hear him talk about his progress. Because of our previous relationship, I assumed that during the interview our conversation would flow and I hoped that he would be as open as he used to be. He still wore his baseball cap, and was constantly in motion, shifting from foot to foot and wiggling in his chair. He rarely spoke in complete sentences and unfortunately he did not share many of his emotions and feelings, although he was very informative.

Growing up in New York City, he is the youngest of three boys. While his parents are in the medical field, his father, an oncologist, and his mother, a nurse, all the sons have chosen different directions. His older brother is a designer of web pages and multi-media products, and his other brother lives in Israel and designs furniture. He himself is interested in history and is thinking of majoring in it. "I found history very fascinating, discovering what used to happen when this was a different place". He is interested both in world history and American history. As a city child, in elementary school he used to play in the city's parks with his friends. However, since his high school was very rigorous, he "was not so involved." He remembers studying Hebrew "forever," since first grade in a school that has a "pretty good Hebrew program." In addition, he spent five summers in Israel, two with his family and three in bilingual camps. He claims that the Jewish and Hebrew education he received, including his experiences in Israel, made him very "Zionist." He still considers himself pro-Israeli: "I still am. I did not push it aside, but I have other things on my mind and life now." In high school he also studied French and participated in an immersion program in Nice, France: "It really improved my French." He does not use it much but he still remembers it. His parents also speak other languages, Hebrew, Spanish, and Russian, all acquired through formal education.

Eli was first exposed to the Chinese language in his last year of high school. A friend of the family went to China, and got him and his father interested in the language, so they all enrolled in an overview course in Chinese. They did not learn much Chinese there, but he admits, "It started me thinking that I wanted to take it." When he came to Brandeis, he tried the first semester and since it was "cool" he continued. In his second semester, he "started getting into it." At this point he decided that if he was "going to do

it, let's go all the way." He confessed how hard it was in the beginning: "It is really a challenge when you are beginner." However, although he says he does not remember why, he felt that he wanted "to continue it more," and that is how he decided to spend a summer in China, which in turn helped him to move quickly to the advanced level. The first challenge for him in Chinese was the ability to produce the tones. It is still hard for him, but by speaking to people, he practices it. He admires the teacher who forces them to write over and over again, understanding that this is the only way to memorize. However, he finds the speaking part of the language most important to him:

> I find speaking to people the most exciting thing. Being able to converse with people in their language…you can talk to so many different people; people get so excited when you can speak to them; it is a great feeling.

Unlike his classmates, Chinese philosophy does not excite him. He repeats over and over again, "I think that the only thing I discovered through Chinese was talking to the Chinese people. I found in general talking to different people very interesting to me .. Just like a random people." He is happy that in China he had a chance to "see things through their eyes." His only concern is the fact that, although he likes to communicate, "when I talk to people I have all these thoughts in my head, but I have a hard time expressing myself." Although writing is also important, he does not feel that he will be able to achieve the level he wants to without spending another period in an immersion program. He is also very interested in reading newspapers in Chinese: "I am more interested in current events, rather than old literature." With the learning of the language he became more and more interested in the culture, which he sees as a very natural development. "I think it's with every language." Nonetheless, he felt motivated because

Chinese is "so different; I have the ability and there are not many people who study it." He recognizes the fact that knowing Chinese would make him more "unique", more "valuable," even " in the job market," although he does not have a specific idea of how, either "law…business" or even in a government job such as the "foreign service." He agrees that knowing so many languages can "open doors," but he insists that this is not his real motivation. He emphasizes the fact that in his environment knowing such a different language differentiates him and even gives him "a little more depth," after all, knowing Hebrew in his circle of friends is very common. In his trip to China, he was also different, since he was the only observant Jew in the group. In order to keep Kosher he ate only Tofu and rice; he did not travel or speak on the phone on Shabbat. His curiosity and love of the Chinese people makes him "love touring, doing sight seeing, just seeing things that happened around there, seeing old temples old, old cities." According to Eli, viewing and being in a new place is the best way to be "knowledgeable" and also makes him appreciate the places he visits. For example, this summer he is joining his parents on a trip to Brazil and he appreciates the opportunity to open a door to another place in the world. He admits that this point of view about the world opening to him is now even stronger because he is becoming more interested in issues such as civil rights and politics. This interest is "developing", but it is still largely on an academic level.

His wide range of interests made him decide to take courses in economics and also Spanish. He is currently in his second semester of Spanish and finds it relatively "easy." He is still concentrating on Chinese because "it is more rewarding." He is even thinking of studying Russian since "the way I look at it…you can go there and you won't seem as much of a foreigner." In order to illustrate his points, he told me how, in his last

summer in China, the language helped him get around. He managed to ask help from people so he could buy a bus ticket and find a good hotel. He was not afraid to go around since he spoke the language and he admits, "I felt good." He never felt lonely because "people kept talking to me." His admiration of the Chinese people is obvious when he says, "I find these people very gentle...really good people who want to help you, nice people who care and maybe sometimes are misunderstood."

Before he left, I asked him how he felt about talking on these issues and he replied;

"It is interesting because I learned a little about myself also. The more I talk, the more I learn."

j. Lee- (Advanced learner of *Chinese*)

When I approached the Chinese instructor for assistance in finding interviewees for the purpose of this research, she immediately reacted by saying, "You need to interview Lee!"

When Lee came to my office, I was immediately impressed by this very tall, skinny young black man who spoke with an upper English class accent. Before sitting down, he took off his blue fisherman's hat and asked me politely if he could use the other chair to put his stuff on, which included a pack of audio cassettes. With his short-sleeved shirt, covered by a wool vest, and his very short curly hair, he reminded me strongly of an English schoolboy. With his big black eyes shining, he listened to my explanation regarding the interview; he even looked happy to hear what I was asking from him. Smiling and in a low voice he talked constantly, and from time to time covered his mouth

with his palms as if he were not sure of his words. I felt that Lee looked so different from other Brandeis students. He seemed utterly out of place in this context.

Lee was born in England to a Jewish English mother and a Jamaican father. He lived in Jamaica about 11years and then moved to the United States. It is hard for him to describe his identity, since his English Jewish family had sort of "broken ties " with England. While his father is "definitely Jamaican, my mother is a whole different story." In terms of his identity, he has a hard time defining himself. He even tries to avoid it, so people will not ascribe "certain characteristics to me." He admits that he lacks the "sense of belonging to a place," although he knows a lot about the Jamaican culture since his mother taught him that. He even believes that he knows more than the average Jamaican, although he "does not feel Jamaican," and tends more to English culture. However, he also believes that although he grew up in the United States and became a citizen here, there are "deep, deep issues that prevent him from feeling comfortable as a citizen [American]."

His mother, who was a lawyer by education, decided to quit law since "she thought it too inhuman," and became a nurse. He sounds very proud when he tells how his mother "had a powerful hand in my education." He believes that because his mother exposed him at an early age to reading, he is a "bookworm". "I was young and she started to read to me....she said she started to read to me even before I was born." He also thinks that, unlike most kids, he had a "long attention span" that helped him "listen for hours and do something that interested me." His mother also forced him to start French lessons at age eight in elementary school, in Jamaica, an elective, since "she thought it was

essential to know another language besides English." From a very early age he also spoke Spanish, since his neighbors spoke it, and it was also required in Jamaican schools.

He describes himself as a "very introverted person. It takes a lot to get me to talk." In addition, he admits that he is very "spaced out" since he forgets things: "I am terribly absent minded." He does not know "how I get through most of the days."

Since he missed "a great deal of time" in elementary school due to an illness, tutors primarily educated him. He was never interested in sports because he was too weak to play outdoors. He does not believe that the years in Jamaica influenced him much compared to his high school years in the United States, and his four years at Brandeis. The family left Jamaica because of the economic crisis in 1989 that affected their business. They all settled in Greenwich, Connecticut, even though his parents got divorced at the time. He believes that since "it's affluent town, ranked as the wealthiest town in the United States," the education there is "extremely good," and so he went to public school. In order to illustrate what he means by "excellent education," he emphasizes the fact that "the majority of the teachers had their Ph.D. and most of them had a least two masters." The fact that they were compensated with high salaries, made them want to be there and do their best for their students. He admits that moving to such an environment from Jamaica was "overwhelming" and he needed some counseling for a while. Nonetheless, these years of high school were very productive academically: "Until the time I went to high school, I think it was more about like just absorbing huge amounts of knowledge." However, he believes that his high school years were the years of his "intellectual shape up". "It was really a high school where we were forced to actually think."

He was a very good learner in high school, although he could not stand calculus. He mainly liked literature and social sciences, such as history. He can name teachers who really influenced him during these years. The history teacher "was the first teacher who really forced me to think and did not let me get away with anything." He can appreciate the fact that he needed to read 100 pages a night in high school. As a history major at Brandeis, he thinks that this high school experience was really "worthy." Since the history teacher forced all of his learners to analyze the material and then to react to it, this method "had a great impact" on him. He mainly loved his simulation games in which the students were asked to reconstruct American history from different points of view. It was like a "thinking exercise." Another person who had a "definite impact" on him was his literature teacher, who also forced him to think and became his "intellectual mentor." She reinforced in him an understanding of Greek mythology and literature. Students were exposed to a lot of material that included feminist and existentialist perspectives. Lee became such a successful learner of literature that in his senior year he taught a literature class at his high school, and he also took three AP courses and got excellent results in all areas. During that time he was very active in other areas as well.

In a search for his religious identity as a Jew, he studied the Torah for six years. He searched to understand the religion through its intellectual background; however he came to realize that Judaism is very "exclusive" and very self-concentrated, since it views everything in the world as being represented by Judaism. Although he was never bar mitzvahed he read the Old Testament for his own interest.

As a result of this understanding, he became a fundamentalist Christian, which he feels is very close to Judaism, in terms of observing the Shabbat. He influenced his

mother who, according to him, is only "technically Jewish," to become a fundamentalist Christian as well, which she continues to be. While being a Christian for two and a half years, Lee was a very active member of his church; he was a leader, the youngest member of the church board ever, ran a biblical scholastic team, and was even sent with a group to the Caiman Islands to build a church. After his Christian period, he became a Muslim, attended a mosque and studied the Koran.

He admits that when he came to Brandeis, he was "confused religiously," Therefore, he tried the Hare Krishna group: "I attended meetings; I read every book and pamphlet and I started to chant Hare Krishna".

Looking back at this period, he confesses that he understands now that he was "seeking spiritual understanding, which was one of the greatest needs of my life." He explains this need by saying: "I am a deeply constructed person" who has always "sought to understand myself and the world." According to him, "everything was very confusing … religion was my way to understand the world". Finally, he decided to leave religion because he came to understand that he is an existentialist, and in a way, an atheist. Although he still believes in the probability of the existence of "a God," he does not see it as relevant. All his searches were, in his opinion, a search for the truth; however his conclusion is that

> the truth is not in some distant place, that any truth that is relevant to the human experience is within the human spirit and so the truth that is relevant to our existence, the truth that really matters to our existence, is around us as long as we are not disabused in any kind of dogma, whether it is religious dogma, or political economic capitalism over socialism, communism.

Therefore he had made the decision to "untangle" and clear his mind and his sight and to look at things with no preconceptions.

During his high school, in addition to his religious and academic activities, Lee also volunteered for the Greenwich hot line. He received calls from all over Connecticut regarding matters ranging from sexual identity issues to marital problems. He worked there for three and a half years and he thinks it "was a very rewarding experience," since he got to know the world beyond Greenwich.

Although his family wanted him to go to Yale or Harvard, he decided to come to Brandeis, since one of his teachers convinced him that this would be a good match for him. He really enjoys the fact that this is a small school and is close to Boston. He started to study Chinese to fulfill his language requirement for his major in history and Asian Studies. When he came to Brandeis, he also studied French at the advanced level, but dropped it because it concentrated on reading and he wanted to practice speaking. Chinese, on the other hand, was so difficult for him at the beginning that he thought of quitting it during his first two semesters. He admits that he did not do so because his teacher did not let him. She encouraged him by giving him decent grades and by not signing the drop slip. He claims that the difficult part of the language for him is the characters. He does not see this as an issue of simple memorization, but as the way of thinking that one has to adopt when learning Chinese: "Our mind has to switch over entirely. It's learning a whole new method…it is a whole different way of thinking than English." His eyes were shining and his hands moved fast with excitement when he talked about the logic of the Chinese characters, and declared that the main challenge in this matter is "you have to learn the way of thinking." When he decided to stay in the

Chinese program, he spent one entire summer studying Chinese five hours a day by himself. He agrees with me that this meant that he has "a very strong will." In that summer, he mainly studied the radicals, which are the basic characters, writing them "over and over" even "100 times" and also "I pronounced them to myself out loud." He also used a book "which was the analysis of radicals," which he read "several times." He believes that was a smart approach, since now it is easy for him to read. He feels that his reading skills are better that his other skills in the language, and he confessed that his real passion in Chinese is old Chinese literature, mainly poetry. When I asked Lee about his willingness to "sacrifice" a whole summer for the sake of the Chinese, he explained he did not do it to be "marketable" as many people believe: "This thought never entered my mind"; he did it because of his long time "love" and "passion" for the language: "Chinese has always been a love of mine, since I began to read those child almanacs and ever since I could read National Geographic, I had a passionate love for Asia." He agrees that this feeling is "odd," but he cannot explain it. Half serious and half joking he says; "If there is such thing as reincarnation, I was Chinese in another life."

He not only admires China, but also Japan, India, and Persia. To illustrate his interest, he describes how he loves Persian classical music and also Arabic music. And in fact, "I mostly listen to Iraqi music." He told me about a night he was at the concert of a "very famous sitar player." He probably noticed my wondering face when he added; " I think this comes from my fascination with old cultures. Chinese civilization is about 5000 years old; Persian also is very old." As a child he read a lot about these civilizations, mainly about their culture, literature, religion, and philosophy. He can appreciate these cultures because he believes that "Any culture that can produce such fine music, such

serene, such beautiful literature has to be a good culture." While talking about it, he sweeps into emotions, describing his feelings when he is going through cultural experiences: "When I listen to a singer sing or chant, there are beautiful lines and words, the description of the rose or a garden, such words and such music moves me. I guess it touches me and I hate to admit it, but it's the spiritual side in me. I am not religious, but I am spiritual, deeply." Although he adds, he has deep respect for religion.

After graduating at the end of this year, he will spend a year in China at Beijing University, and he is "very, very happy" and "very, very excited" about it.

He tried to study Japanese, but had to quit since it was too hard and he did not want to neglect the Chinese: " I have more respect for Chinese; I value Chinese culture; I think it is superior to Japanese." Japanese is "part of Chinese culture and so is the language." He plans to study both Japanese and Persian in the future. For him, Persian "ranks as highly as Chinese." He cannot decide whether his declared "passion for languages and people and cultures" or his fascination with the literature of these cultures will lead him to study other languages such as Hindu and Russian. Besides living in China, he does not have any definite idea regarding his future. It might be as an academic who investigates the modern history of China or as an international lawyer. He does not plan to go to China to influence or make changes, but "to be changed."

He has an international circle of friends, but emphasizes several times that his ex-girl friend is Chinese and they are still very good friends. He told me that his friends are much like himself, but are not part of his Chinese advanced level class.

Towards the end of our conversation, Lee wanted to make sure that I understood his special relationship with the Chinese language. This relationship makes him angry

when he sees that his classmates do not treat the language the way he does; he tells me that he can be considered obsessed with the language. As part of this obsession, he does calligraphy, teaches himself an ancient Chinese dialect that allows him to read ancient poetry, and he "cannot pass a character anywhere and not find out what it is." He says, "My last thoughts at night are of Chinese and my first thoughts in the morning are again of Chinese." He told me how, the night before, even though he had obligations to other courses, he kept thinking about a character, and he could not sleep. While in bed he heard a program on Chinese nutrition that mentioned the fact that the Chinese believe that eating fish prolongs their life. This story helped him understand the character that he was looking at. It made him "very happy." Other signs of this obsession are connected to the fact that he listens to any program about China on radio, TV, and he surfs the Net for more information. His room windows are covered with Chinese poetry.

Before he left the interview, Lee quoted in Chinese first, and then in English, a Chinese master who said, "Do not let it be said that between sky and earth there is no truth." Lee explains, "This idea is the whole thing, that in life we see the truth. Any truth relevant to us is here and not in some distant place. It is here before our eyes if we can see it clearly." This quote that he also has on his dorm wall seems to summarize most of Lee's thoughts, philosophy of life, and is a message that he tries to spread around. I genuinely appreciated how Lee had opened his soul to me; it was a wonderful experience, and a very deep one. I must admit that I was so overwhelmed, that when Lee left my office I took a long walk to reflect on what I had heard.

k. **Betty-** (Advanced learner of *Japanese*)

Betty did not initially show up for our meetings. It seemed strange to me that the polite Asian girl with whom I had talked did not even call to apologize. I even became a bit worried since I had noticed that she had written the date and the time for our meeting in her calendar. Her teacher, who is a traditional Japanese woman, was astonished and suggested that I come and meet Betty during Japanese class. When I came the same afternoon, Betty came running from the room, bowing and nodding her head in regret, saying, "Sorry, sorry, I should have called, but my other professor kept me longer than I had thought, and I could not leave." Later that afternoon, she appeared in my office and apologized again; when I tried to stop her, she said, "Please forgive me for being so rude." It was not only her politeness that made her look different to me; there was also something in her big brown eyes that had an expression of both sadness and intelligence. While sitting in my office, she seemed "boyish," wearing her old jeans and a short red sweater, folding her legs on the rung of the chair, I suddenly remembered her from her first semester at Brandeis. She had written to me, as the Director of the Language Program a letter of complaint regarding the fact that we did not let her teacher continue teaching her class. With clear and strong words she demanded that we to change our policy. I reminded her about the letter and she pulled back her short dark hair and said, "Well you have to understand it really mattered to me then," and smiled.

Betty was born in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan. Because of her father's business, they had to move frequently, and as result she feels that she does not have a place she can call "home." She can only remember the last place they moved to. "It was big and beautiful," but two years later she was sent with her sister to live in the United States, so she "could not enjoy it [her home]." Her childhood memories included visits to the big

mansions her grandparents had in the south of Taiwan, mainly during the holidays, such as the "moon holiday", which is equal to Thanksgiving."

During her school years she loved math and science and also Chinese literature, and hated history and geography. The reason was because she "had to memorize; I do not enjoy that very much." She enjoyed " solving problems, or literature or writing, where you express yourself." Because of the educational system in Taiwan, she had to memorize a lot in school; "There is a lot of repetition." Like most children in Taiwan, after her regular school, she went to a special school that prepares children for their high school education. Since high school is not required, only those who pass the entrance exam get to study there. Since they had to be in school from nine to five, and even for half a day on Saturday, she "did not have much of a life." Her extracurricular activities mainly concentrated on reading. She thinks of her family as very traditional; her mother was pressured by her grandparents to have a boy, so until her brother was born, she was the family "boy." She said, "My hair was short; I never wore skirts and I acted and wanted to be like a boy." Later when her brother was born and he got all the attention, she became a "sad, angry, rebellious kid" who "questioned her mother a lot." Betty even withdrew and kept to herself and invested her time in reading by herself. She is grateful to her third grade teacher who saw what a "radical" child she was, although she did very well at school, and decided to give her responsibility which made a big change in her life. Her duties, that included assigning classroom roles to her fellow students, taught her leadership, how to be responsible and "care about other people." Because of her appreciation for her teacher who had recognized her talent and made such a "difference" in her life, she frequently visited her after graduating from this school. Betty still has with

her the six-volume Chinese history series that the teacher gave her as gift before she left for the United States. At home, they spoke both Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese, which is a Chinese dialect. She can express herself better and more deeply in Mandarin, because her vocabulary in Taiwanese is very limited.

I was amazed to hear how Betty and her sister had moved to the United States when she was sixteen and her sister was only fourteen. This was a traumatic experience for her, and while she was telling me about it, she cried. The fact that they were alone without their parents "was very tough on little girls, because that was the most crucial period." As a result, the sisters became very close--they were almost "each others parents." They actually came to study at high school while their parents were going through the process of immigrating here. She believes that her parents wanted her to become more "international," but she also knows that her father's business was deteriorating and he wanted to join his partner in New York. At the beginning, they lived with her father's partner, but since "they were horrible," her father found them a place to live by themselves and "it was difficult" until he joined them and opened his own business here. She praises her high school in Brooklyn, New York: "I had the most wonderful education there. My teachers were wonderful; the school was perfect for me. It was very flexible, and whoever wanted to could excel...there were a lot of courses...I got to know my teachers very well....and made friends. And my English also got better." As an ESL learner she did not have to study foreign language at school, but she studied Spanish for a year and she "loved it." She had an "American mom," who was the resource room teacher at the school. This teacher helped her with her homework and they became such good friends that Betty visited her at her home. This teacher was even very

supportive during her first year of college at Brandeis. In high school, she continued with her love for science and was on the math team. Most of her friends were Russian Jews whom she met on the math team and in her advanced courses. She is very proud of the fact that she was one of the top 15 students in her class of 800 in high school.

At Brandeis, she was again exempted from the language requirement; however because of her "love for languages" she wanted to continue to study Spanish. Her ambition is to know many languages: "I love being able to read in a language; I hate translations. It is different to read in the language. You read the real thing." After being unable to enroll in Spanish because all the classes were filled, she met a Japanese exchange student and she wanted to talk her. However, Betty felt that the only way to communicate with the exchange student was by talking to her in Japanese. Because of this encounter, she decided to enroll in an introductory course in Japanese. Her brother was angry at her decision; he actually called her "traitor" because of what Japan had done to Taiwan. According to Betty, there are still many people who are anti-Japanese in Taiwan and she admitted that even she is still angry, mainly with the Japanese government, but not at the people. What influenced her to study Japanese is her Japanese friend, with whom she is still close: "Knowing people on a personal level really helps me in terms of clarifying any misunderstanding." Interestingly enough, she mentions how the Japanese are not familiar with this history in Taiwan, even though Taiwan suffered under the Japanese for 50 years. For Betty, who studied all her years in school about Japanese atrocities during the war, to have a Japanese friend means "that it was history." In addition, she is happy since she can communicate with her grandfather who lived during this period of the Japanese occupation, and basically speaks only Taiwanese and

Japanese. She also intends to go to Japan after her graduation, and she feels that it makes her a " more open person". In general, her appreciation of Japan and Japanese stems from her feeling that "Japanese is such an interesting language and Japan is an interesting country." Proudly she told me how she had just completed a composition on how the Japanese accept innovative ideas. On the other hand, she would not like to live there: "I am a female and it is still in a way a very racist and sexist society." The most fascinating part of the Japanese language for her is the fact that Japanese is "an ambiguous language; one thing can mean a lot of things; there are different ways to expressing things." This possibility excites her since it is allows her to "play" with these elements. She also loves the fact that you can tell from the language people's social status by "their choice of words." Although she started the language from the beginning at Brandeis, she does not find it difficult, only "a lot of work." Her knowledge of Chinese put her at an advantage (since Japanese uses Chinese characters); however, she still needs to work hard. It takes a lot of memorization and repetition so she can overcome the confusion, such as the fact that a word can be read in five different ways. Reading Japanese is her favorite activity. She gets emotional when she reads some of the poems that the teacher gave her, "because of the content and the word choice that the author makes, the finesse, the most beautiful, the best choice, the appreciation." Unlike some of her classmates, she does not like the popular Japanese cartoons, because they are sexist and violent. She can not stand the fact that the language itself is so sexist: "Sometimes, when I talk in the plain form, I am corrected to speak in a feminine form and add other words, endings. Males have other words and endings. I do not like that." Since her strength in her native language is writing (she publishes in the local Chinese newspaper), she feels comfortable doing writing in

Japanese. She admits that she needs to be pushed to speak since it is her weakest skill. Because of her dedication to the Japanese language, she almost failed her first semester at Brandeis, since she devoted so much time to studying Japanese before preparing her other course work. She reports spending hours every afternoon in the language lab, listening to Japanese tapes, and memorizing the words. Therefore, she had to drop out of the language for a year to improve her other grades. As an economics major, she notes that she is a very good student, and she pushes herself to "know more." Even with her busy schedule, she audits an additional class per semester in another subject. What bothers her the most is when one of her classmates is not prepared for class: "It is frustrating to be in a class with somebody who does not do his or her work." Her teacher has a reputation for giving a lot of homework, but it does not bother her because "I like to push myself to a different level." What she says she hates the most is to memorize dialogues. She admits that Japan for her is "a dream world," and the Japanese "are the most wonderful people I know." Before she left, I asked her about her identity, and I could feel the hesitation in her voice when she answered, "I will feel more American if I go back to Taiwan, but while I am here, I think of myself as Taiwanese, even though I am Americanized in many ways."

I thanked her for sharing her story with me and told her how much I appreciate her struggle when living here alone as a teenager. She replied, "I usually do not talk about it; when I do I cry". I thanked her again and wished her luck. Before leaving my office, she paused for a second and said; "I think I forgot to tell you that next year I am going to continue with my Spanish."

m. **Jill-** (Advanced learner of *Japanese*)

Jill immediately stood out from the rest of her advanced level classmates. Although there were only four students in her class, she sat by herself with the distance of two rows between herself and the others. When I asked her to come and meet with me, she agreed politely but with not much enthusiasm. When she entered my room, I realized how fashionable this young woman is with tight black jeans, platform shoes, and rings in her nose. She put her shiny plastic bag on the floor and, with her head slightly leaning towards the floor, we started our conversation. I could not hear her very well because of her quiet voice. Her speech was not clear, mainly because of the ring she had in her tongue. Her teacher was constantly worried about her performance, and had complained that Jill did not come prepared for class. I was very eager to understand how a student who was enrolled in such a high level course with such a demanding teacher "dared" not to invest the necessary time in it.

Jill was born in the United States to a Japanese mother and to a father who "is part French and part American." When she was one they moved to Japan and she grew up in Tokyo. In Japan she went to the American school and she was happy because it let her "live in both worlds." Most of the students there were Americans who came with their parents who worked in international companies. Art was her favorite subject in school. For fun she used "to hang out with her friends" with whom she is still in touch through e- mail. She completed her high school education in a boarding school in America because her father had also studied in boarding school. Unfortunately she was rejected from the school her father went to. Although at the beginning, the boarding school experience was hard on her because she was "homesick," after a while she enjoyed it,

made a lot of friends, spent a summer in Germany in a school-sponsored summer program, and appreciated it because "it really prepared me for college."

Growing up in Japan, she became fluent in Japanese. Her mom speaks Japanese to her, but she usually answers in English. She states that she can not read and write Japanese very well and "that is the reason I am taking this course." In addition to Japanese, she is also studying French at an advanced level, although it is more difficult for her. She had studied French in high school, but since she can not speak it well, she struggles with it. She emphasizes the fact that she "really wants to know it"(French) because she wants to go to Paris in her junior year. Jill also plans to do something with fashion in the future, so French will be "handy." "Hopefully I will be minoring in French." Jill also admits that her real pleasure is that her French grandmother, who forgets that she is not fluent in French "goes off to me in French" and she really likes to communicate with her. But, in general, she enjoys the idea of becoming "trilingual." She thinks that it "will be cool."

She claims that Japanese is not hard; "It is fine. It is just that the teacher gives a lot of homework and is 'making us write a lot of essays'." The best way for her to study the language, she says, is by reading a book, and "I make a bunch of cards to remember vocabulary," and of course doing her homework. Her main need in terms of Japanese is to improve the level of her vocabulary. Although she has studied Japanese all her life in her school, her Japanese "is bad, it is very colloquial…it is enough to get by…like to be able to have a good conversation, but they are not intellectual conversations. I do not know very hard words." She uses her Japanese in the summers, when she works as a waitress, or in a hotel or clothing store in Japan. She also needs to improve her grammar.

Her father is a translator and it "annoys him when I talk in my colloquial Japanese." She says she is doing many drills using her grammar book. Her main problem is that she can not remember for a long period of time, but since she has visual memory, she gets very good grades. She is still struggling with the characters, but "writing is helping me a lot." Watching Japanese movies also helps her, but she gets excited only if she does "really well in the exam." She believes that knowing languages including Japanese will "come in handy in my future career." She believes she wants to work for "[an international] company in fashion, like in Tokyo, which is the center."

She does not feel that learning the language is a big effort for her since she knows "85%, so I do not see any reason of not learning the extra 15%."

It is interesting to note how she defines herself. "I have three nationalities…I do not consider myself French at all; I either consider myself Japanese or American, but I am going to choose American…I am American because when I am with Japanese people they think I am not Japanese." She recognizes the fact that there is part Japanese in her; however, she believes that "the way I act, I am open to people and more giving; that is more American." In the Japanese part of her she claims she "has a hard time looking in people's eyes…this is the part of me that is very reserved." Although she likes reading, her favorite activity "is shopping," hanging out with friends, and parties. Her friends "are all Americans from all different groups" and she feels she is "in the middle of all of them." However, she wishes to have more Asian friends so "I can talk to them". As a student, she believes that she is "decent," but she knows that she needs to work harder to get better grades. She is amazed at how much her classmates who have been studying the language only for two years already know.

Before leaving the interview, she says that being so "different" makes her happy. As a child, she also enjoyed the attention. She still enjoys it: "I do not like to be invisible."

During the interview I felt uncomfortable; Jill never established eye contact with me, and I felt that she did not fully share her story with me. However, reading the transcript again, I realize how much she told me in her few words and I really thank her for it.

n. **Eleanor** – (Advanced learner of *Japanese*)

When I met with Eleanor to schedule the interview, I was sure that she was an American of Asian descent. With her perfect American accent, dressed in jeans and a short-sleeved T-shirt, she blended in with the other Brandeis students in our program. However, when she came to the interview, I immediately realized how different Elizabeth was from the norm. I noticed how neat and tidy she was. Unlike most typical Brandeis students her shirt was ironed and so were her pants. The gold jewelry she wore, her necklaces, rings, and earrings, in addition to her platform shoes, and her long painted nails created the impression of a woman-child. This was a rare look among our students, and I immediately guessed that she might be another international student in our program. Her hair was pulled back in a very orderly manner to a ponytail, and had the smell of baby shampoo. Her face was chubby, and with a smile that revealed straight white teeth.

Eleanor is indeed an international student, a Korean, but one who has lived most of her life in Hong Kong as the only child of Korean parents who had moved to Hong Kong to "do business there." Until ninth grade, she studied in a private Chinese school where, aside from math and science that were taught in Chinese, the curriculum was

taught in "British English." She transferred to an international school for grades ten and eleven and spent her last two years of high school in a boarding school in New Hampshire.

She grew up in an apartment building, like most people in Hong Kong who "live in high rise apartments, 30-40 floors." In regard to my question about her activities other than school in Hong Kong, she complained that she "did not have much of a life" because the Chinese schools "do not emphasize extra-curricular activities" and, in addition, they "have a lot of homework." On the weekends, she went to a Korean school and to church, and sometimes watched movies with friends who were mainly international students who did not speak Chinese. Her favorite subject in school was music, since she had played the piano from a young age and "it is her life." The move to a school in the United States was a dramatic change for Eleanor. In her Chinese school,

> we had 50 people in a class, and we were seated in eight rows. I was really tall…so I sat in the back. You were not supposed to say anything in class…. The teacher called on you; otherwise you had to listen to their lectures.

When she came to study in the United States, "there were discussions in class and participation and it was really scary." As a result of this earlier education, she claims that in class "I do not talk so much." Another change to which she had to adapt was to become independent. As an only child, she was "spoiled" by her mother, and since being far from home was hard on her, and she visited home every three months. However, she got used to "doing her laundry," and she accepted the fact that "I just stayed at the end. I like it a lot." The main reason for her to come and study in the United States was that in

"1997 Hong Kong was taken over by China," so many people wanted to build their future by "going to studying abroad."

Eleanor is fluent in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Korean. During high school she hoped to improve her Mandarin, but the school did not let her study it since she knew the language; therefore, she decided to study another Asian language, Japanese. She thought that since after graduation she "probably will go back to Asia … I want to do something with Asia, and Japan has such a strong economy." As an economics major at Brandeis, she believes that learning Japanese was a smart idea. However, she claims that it was mostly easy on her since "Korean is really similar to Japanese and I know the Chinese characters, Kanji characters so it is pretty fast for me to learn." Because of her background in the language, she entered the fourth semester level of Japanese. However, she had to struggle with material she was not familiar with, such as new vocabulary and grammar structures. In her advanced course, the main difficulty for Eleanor is the fact that she needs to express herself in writing. According to her, "It is harder for me to express what I want to say [in writing]."

As someone who learns through auditory methods, "if someone goes through something and reads it to me out loud, I can catch it," she likes the conversational part of the course. However, she needs to use the dictionary in order to write her weekly essays. Although she recognizes that the similarities between Korean (her mother tongue) and Japanese in both vocabulary and grammar are the result of the "horrible" fact that Japan occupied Korea for 45 years, she still thinks that learning Japanese " is cool." Eleanor is fully aware of the two trends among Koreans, regarding Japan and Japanese. On the one hand, "a lot of people still have anti-Japanese feeling." Mostly older people …because

they survived through that [the occupation]." Other people in Korea "started to copy the Japanese, like in technology, fashion or music" and the new trend belongs to those who "did not live through this period, they are more accepting, they are more open about Japanese culture." In terms of her personal position, she tries to separate the language from the history of the relationships between the two nations: "Talking Japanese is not a problem. It is just another language. It is not like I am in love with Japan. It is more like I am going to do business." She claims her right to know the language as part of her personal needs: "I will have to deal with Japanese people, so I want to speak the language. I want communication." She does not see herself as special in doing that. "A lot of Koreans in Korea take Japanese too… There are a lot of Japanese tourists coming to Korea. And in hotels almost everyone can speak Japanese." She sounds very realistic when she says, " I did not live through it [the occupation] so I do not have a problem." She emphasizes the fact that she is not indifferent to the past and when she saw an exhibition in Hong Kong on how "the Japanese tortured Chinese women and Korean women…of course it is very disturbing, and that makes me stop and think." However she claims over and over again that since she "did not live through it," she "does not really understands it as they do, so I did not have anything against them [the Japanese]."

Eleanor never felt moments of crisis in the process of learning Japanese, although she admits that the amount of work she needs to do for her current Japanese class makes her sometimes think, "Why am I taking it?" She has "to do three hours for one word sheet, because I have to look up words in the dictionary." Otherwise, she feels that languages are relatively easy for her. She believes she has "more tolerance towards languages than other subjects, like math, sciences…I can deal with languages. I can never

deal with physics." At the same time the feels "an obligation" not to disappoint her teacher who works hard and "she wants us to improve."

Eleanor recognizes the advantage of the fact that only four students participate in her Japanese class since they all know each other by name, and they feel comfortable with each other. However, it can also be "stressful" when she has to "skip a class," because she believes the teacher will feel bad and that the students have more obligations to participate. Although she has studied the languages for so many years, and she is enrolled in a high level course, she feels that she is not "confident at all speaking in Japanese," although she can "understand better than she can speak." She also expresses her need to study more Japanese: "Right now I am not fluent, but it's not like I do not understand anything. I am sort of in the middle…sort of halfway. I have a strong feeling of wanting to continue it and carry on". She recognizes the efforts she needs to put in her studies, and explains her eagerness to study more so she will not forget it. In spite of her teacher's recommendation, she decided not to spend a summer in a summer school in Japan, because "I am not fluent enough," and she is afraid that her lack of success might affect the reputation of her teacher. "If she recommended me and I do really bad, then it is not good for her either."

Her favorite activity in Japanese is reading: "I get to know more culture through reading the stories and essays." What attracts her the most in this culture is the Japanese "politeness, clean people, who are smart; they come up with their own technology," which "is something we should all learn from." Her appreciation of this culture makes her want "to go to Japan and live there for a year." Like other classmates, she watched

Japanese cartoons that are "very famous" in Korea, since they "draw very well and they have a good story line."

As an economics major with a 3.9 GPA, she tries to have "fun" and also to keep her "Korean culture." She goes out with other Korean friends to a Korean grocery store; they buy food and cook together. Being with other Koreans makes her happy: "I feel comfortable with people who speak my language; I do not know why".

During the interview I feet that Eleanor is trying to covey that her interest in the language is a combination of her admiration of the Japanese and Japan and her facility with language in general and with Asian languages in particular. This position was different from the position of my other interviewees, and I was wondering if, indeed, she had any personal connection to the language. When, at the end of the interview, I asked her how she felt talking about this subject with me, she revealed her personal attachment to Japanese:

> I consider Japanese one of the courses that I enjoy the most, although I have a lot of work to do. I am more interested in improving it than in any other class. I feel relaxed there... also people in the class... are very nice. That is one thing that makes me smile.

And she adds,

> This [Japanese] is something that I know more about, because like my mom and dad when I was young, and they wanted to say something they did not want me to know, they would speak in Japanese. That was one of my of my goals, to understand so they do not say anything bad about me...I was brought up with it... people around me spoke it.

o. **Poen-** (Advanced learner of *Japanese*)

Poen is the only male student who is enrolled in the advanced Japanese course this semester. His heavy accent immediately disclosed the fact that he is an international student. Poen is an Asian looking young man whose very short black hair, jeans and striped T-shirt emphasize his slim body. With a shy smile, he agreed to be an interviewee; however, he did not understand well the purpose of my research. It seemed that it was because of his deep respect for his teacher, and for my title, that he agreed to cooperate. He looked at the tape recorder, and politely protested when I asked his permission to record our conversation. I persuaded him that recording him is necessary for my research and he agreed. During the interview he spoke softly but clearly. Many times, he asked me to repeat the question for him, pausing to think, and constantly searching for the right vocabulary to express himself.

Poen is a South Korean who came to the United States in 1990 to continue his formal education. He confessed that he "always wanted to come and live in the United States," and that he always "had an interest in American culture." However, what brought him here is the fact that it was " harder" for him to get into a South Korean college since universities there require students to pass a "difficult" entrance exam. His high school years in South Korea were " terrible" for him. Instead of spending his break studying before entering high school, as most Korean students do, he decided to go on a vacation to Europe, and as a result he "fell behind." In general, he does not have a high opinion of South Korean education. In Seoul, where he grew up, they have "a lot of students in the class and the same teacher teaches them from gym class to math class. That is how it goes, teacher teaches all classes." He hated gym, but loved Korean literature, although it "was hard." He is the eldest son of a restaurant manager and a housewife, and he

recognizes the fact that, thanks to his mother's efforts, he loves reading. "She gave me presents if I read 10-20 books." According to him, he was "a terrible kid" who had a "typical childhood" that included shopping, arcade games, and drinking at the age 12 or 13. Poen traveled to different countries including countries in Europe and in Asia such Thailand and Taiwan. He came to the United States with a group of South Koreans and spent the first half -year in California and the rest of his high school years in boarding schools in Hawaii and Vermont. He came to Brandeis with a friend whose father is a professor at the University.

In his freshman year at Brandeis, Poen met another student who was majoring in Asian Studies. This person, who now works in China, convinced him to follow this major, and so he did. Learning Japanese in addition to Chinese, was part of his foreign language requirement for this major. He also studied one semester of French and "it was fun."

His first exposure and learning experience with Japanese occurred when he was a child. He liked Japanese music and Japanese cartoons. He explained, "It is more violent; the American [cartoons] are more like fairy tales, and the Japanese ones are more realistic, science fiction, more creative." He also bought the popular Japanese comic books and through them, he learned Japanese writing. He learned it, so "I could know the title of the animation that I liked, and then I read them." The fact that he heard a lot of Japanese in his high school where he had plenty of Japanese friends, and that Korean is similar to Japanese, really helped him.

He is grateful to his Japanese teacher who "pushes me to study." He admits that, "I do not study unless someone makes me." He usually memorizes the dialogues and the

vocabulary very well, and gets good grades. In the future, he plans to study in Japan, and maybe do some international Japanese work. Interestingly enough, he wants to reach the same level in Chinese, because it is "more needed." However, he never thought of dropping out of Japanese because he is afraid to forget it. He spent a semester in China and his Chinese improved; however, he needs to study it more "seriously." Looking at my quizzical face he explains: "seriously means when you actually study for practical use, to compete with people. Not seriously means you want to watch Japanese animation… just for my needs."

He admits that Japanese is easier for him than for American learners. However, there are many components to the language that he needs to learn and "Japanese gets harder as you study more." His highest skill in Japanese is writing, but he says his speaking is "poor."

He claims that at the beginning, Japanese was exciting to study because it was hard, but "I knew it," but now he does not feel comfortable because he does not study enough and there are other students who are better than he. He refers to the Japanese student in his class and says, "I do not feel right to have someone that good in the class." He hates when the speaking in class is artificial. He would love to have it in a more natural setting as he had in China, when he spoke with people. He considers himself intermediate in Japanese, because he is not "fluent" yet, and he still needs to use the dictionary. Since he is graduating this year, he is a bit disappointed that he did not reach his goal to be fluent in Japanese and Chinese, but "it has not gone far enough yet." He had hoped to become like his cousin who is fluent in five languages. He feels that this could make him "special." He admits that the fact that he picks up language relatively

"fast" has made him want to be a linguist, but he hates the idea of taking all "these linguistics courses."

He claims that his love for languages is because he loves "being international, knowing other people's languages…communicating with them. When I was in China and spoke to Chinese people, I actually could express my thoughts, some kind of exchange…it feels special…I like making friends with a lot of people."

In terms of the relationships between Korea and Japan he says,

> I have anti- Japanese feelings, but love the culture and I know many Japanese friends…they did a lot of horrible things…it is hard to explain…I want to improve relations. Funny thing is that a lot of people want to act like Japanese … Because they are better off. I do not like the government, the country… but I like the art, the music…it is not simple

Inspired by my questions regarding languages, he emphasized the fact that for him English is very "difficult" and his English "is not good yet." He says his writing in English is better than his speaking, but admits that, "the pronunciation, I will never get it."

Before leaving the interview, he again said, "I do not feel comfortable when it is recorded," so I promised I would erase it, and I did.

Chapter 5

5. Analysis

As I outlined in the first chapter of this study, the goal of my research is to identify the characteristics of learners who enrolled in advanced courses of Hebrew,

Japanese, and Chinese at Brandeis University. Such information may provide insight into the dropout phenomenon (see pp. 1-2), by examining those students who choose to continue and study at an advanced level. The data gathered in this study suggest that these learners possess common qualities in regard to their developmental and cognitive levels, as well as their personality traits. The latter is an area that is mainly the province of the discipline of psychology.

I approached this research as an educator, utilizing the qualitative research methodology. This methodological approach enabled me, with the help of various theoretical frameworks, to elaborate on some impressions in which the above psychological issues can be addressed. Therefore, I will start my Analysis of the data by reviewing the possible psychological frameworks in which learners at the advanced college level can be analyzed in terms of their development, cognition and personality traits and I will suggest which theories can serve as frameworks for analyzing my data. In addition, I will point out the common characteristics of these learners in terms of their beliefs as well as the conditions that encouraged them to pursue their advanced language learning.

Thus, the analysis of the data will concentrate on three areas:

- The learners' developmental aspects,
- The learners' common characteristics; and
- The learners' past and present environments.

5.1. The learners' developmental aspects.

a. Theoretical base

The subjects in my research are college students whose ages range from 20- 30 years. Most of them are in various stages of their undergraduate work; only two are enrolled in a Masters program. Analyzing the views of such a group of learners requires examination of the current research regarding the human development and academic life of college students.

It seems that there is agreement among researchers that most college students go through developmental processes during their college years. Therefore, the focus of this part of analysis is based on research of the kind of development that occurs during the college years.

According to Arnold and King (1997), in the last decade the research regarding college-age learners was motivated by the desire to both maximize the learners' academic potential and to answer the need to prepare them for a " technological world with an ever increasing knowledge base" (1997, pp. vii). This requires them to have acquired abilities to "adapt their skills to changing situations" (1997, pp. vii). Arnold and King emphasize the fact that as a result of this research, higher education seems to focus more on students' growth than on controlling their behavior. While in the past the research was heavily based on psychological theories, there is a tendency today to consider sociological theories as well. The latter take account of the learners' social context, which includes a consideration of their race, gender, and class, as well as their personal characteristics.

Arnold and King claim that the common thread among the latter theories is the conviction that college level learners experience a qualitative growth. This growth is expressed in their tendency to become more mature, independent, complex, have "greater

ethical and esthetic awareness"(1997, pp. x), and develop the ability to "cope better with life tasks and external demands" (1997, pp. x). They also tend to focus more on their "internal sense of self" (1997, pp. x), rather than external identity boundaries.

Arnold and King classify the developmental theories regarding college-age students in the following groups:

- The first one includes the integrative theories of development such as the "Seven Vectors"(1997, pp. xi) and "ego development" theories (1997, pp. xi). The seven vectors include seven mediums on which college students reflect their growth and development. Among them are gaining competence in the areas of intellectual and physical skills, by developing both their minds and their motor abilities, as well as competence in interrelationships in which they become more attuned to the needs of those who surround them. They also learn how to deal with their emotions and feelings, to express them, and to control them. They seem more independent and autonomous by depending less on the opinions of the others and by using their own skills to solve problems. Their independence allows them to fulfill their own ideas and to accomplish their own goals. This autonomy does not prevent them from being aware of their environment. Rather, it allows them to revise their old relationships and establish new ones according to their needs. In these relationships, they show their abilities to both express intimacy as well as "tolerance and appreciation of differences" (Chickering and Reiser, 1997, pp.6).They are capable of developing stronger

- Interpersonal and family commitments. In terms of their identity, Chickering and Reisser (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 17) claim that college students have more "comfort with body and appearance… gender …[and] sexuality" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 17),

and, at the same time, they can view themselves in their larger, historical and cultural context. They also develop better self-esteem and self-acceptance that leads to personal stability. They are even clearer in terms of their goals, since they are better focused. What is important to mention regarding this theory is that the stages do not necessarily occur linearly, in chronological order, but in a very loose way

- The Ego Development Theory was not specifically developed to describe college learners; however, Weathersby (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 21-22) believes that it can explain many of the changes that facilitate these learners' growth. She relies on Loevinger's theory (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. xi) that ego is the factor that integrates different personal factors such as impulse control, character development, interpersonal style, conscious preoccupation, and cognitive style into maturing beliefs, values, and reasoning. There are nine stages identified by Ego Development Theory that traditional age learners in higher education may go through. According to Weathersby (Arnold King, 1997, pp. 27), the latest study indicates that from freshman year to senior year, learners move from the stage of "self awareness" to "conscientious," a stage that they may reach by the end of their sophomore year. This movement from fourth stage to the fifth, reaffirms the notion that they become more responsible for their actions by being able to criticize themselves, evaluate their standards, set long-term goals, communicate their concerns, differentiate feelings from behavior, and, in terms of their cognitive style, develop conceptual complexity.
- Other models of development relate to the learners' cognitive abilities. Arnold and King (1997, pp. xi) emphasize the centrality of this model, since most professors believe (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. xi) that the primary mission of higher education is to

develop learners' intellectual abilities. Arnold and King explain that cognitive development occurs when there is a change in a way of thinking and perceiving the world as a result of an ability to understand different experiences. There are several models that relate to this. For example, Perry (Arnold and King, 1997, pp.48-88) created a model that maps out a scheme of development of university learners. He claims that there are several phases that these learners go through in their cognitive development. The first is the dualism phase in which learners relate to material as either correct or incorrect as presented by the teacher who represents authority in the area. Learners at this stage concentrate on tests, following instructions, and working hard. They treat knowledge as quantitative. Second is the multiplicity phase in which it becomes clear to the learners that there is more than one answer to questions, and several opinions to consider. Third is the relativism phase in which learners learn to identify the quality of the knowledge as related to the context in which it is expressed. Fourth is the commitment phase, in which the learners choose to follow one belief or set of values. In the following stage the learners may go back to phase one or other phases, in order to examine and try another area of learning.

- Arnold and King (1997, p. xii) note that the fact that Perry did not include women in his research has led several female researchers to apply his qualitative research methods and to interview women in order to explore their cognitive development. Indeed, Goldberg, Clinchy, Belenky, and Tarule identified five aspects of women's perception of knowledge. They used the metaphor of "voice" to describe this process, going from "silence to integration of voices" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. ix). They identified levels of involvement and knowing from the very lowest, in which women just keep quiet and

behave according to the norms that are dictated to them, to the next level, in which women develop their listening skills and abilities to identify the right answer; to the next level at which they become aware of their inner voices and see the truth as based on personal experience, which leads to subjectivity. The next level is one in which women reason and evaluate opinions based on their learning, and understand that there is room for interpretation. The very highest level is one in which they construct knowledge by integrating "knowledge that they felt intuitively was important with knowledge and methods of knowing that they had learned during their formal education"(Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 216).

- Magolda (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. xii -xiii) examined students' perceptions of their academic experience. She followed the epistemological model in which she categorized students' perceptions about knowing into three different levels. She examined the following aspects of their academic experience: relationship with teachers, peers, class structures and techniques, and their perception and knowledge. At the least developed level, there are learners who typically obtain their knowledge from the instructors and tend not to share it with their peers. The instructor is expected to ensure that students know the material, and, in general, the knowledge that these learners obtain is described by her as "certain and absolute." At the second level of development are learners who are traditional knowers. They not only understand the knowledge, but also discuss it with their peers, and expect their instructors to help them apply the knowledge; for them knowledge is "partially certain and partially uncertain." At the highest level of development, they think independently, share their thinking with peers, and are rewarded

by the teacher for originality. In addition, knowledge is viewed very relativisticaly; "every one has own beliefs"(Arnold and King, 1997, pp.121).

- In a different cognitive model, Kitchener and King (Arnold and King, 1997, pp.147-157) offered seven stages of development. Their theory is based on Dewey's notion of reflective thinking (Arnold and King, 1997,pp. ix). They claim that a "reflective thinker" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. xiii) is a person who uses judgments while "solving problems." Among the criteria that such reflective theories used for these judgments were evaluation of evidence, expert opinions, and implications of the solution. The seven stages suggested by Kitchener and King move from a simple way of knowing in which "knowing is characterized by concrete single category belief system" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp.144), to the very highest stage in which "individuals...believe that knowing is uncertain and subject to interpretation" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 147). Their data also suggests that only during the adult years and through advanced education are the more complex stages developed.
- A different type of cognitive theory relates to the development of learners' spirituality. According to Arnold and King (1997) this spirituality model falls into the cognitive model since it "examines the way in which individuals make meaning and reason in the moral and spiritual domain" (Arnold and King, 1997. Pp. xii). An example of this perspective is Fowler's theory that, according to Arnold and King, was influenced by Kohlberg's 1973 moral development theory and by the Selman's 1976 theory of "social perspective theory" (Arnold and King, 1997, p. xiii). Fowler claims that searching for faith at college age should not be seen as a religiously matter, "Rather, faith becomes the designation for the way of learning into life. It points to a way of making sense of

one's existence" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 164). Fowler also claims that the individuals' surroundings serve as a mediator for personal faith, since events, people, and places are interpreted or supported by our view of faith. Therefore, faith is a relational matter as well as a moral one. He identifies stages of faith, and says that it is possible to move from one stage to another only by a painful process. The very "primitive stage" is one in which faith is intuitive and projective, and in which a young child feels and imitates the expressions of faith in his immediate environment. In the second stage, there is the faith of the community in which beliefs and stories are adapted by the individuals. The third stage is one in which faith becomes the orientation for developing values and bases for identity. Stage four usually occurs when individuals are facing tensions that influence their emotional states. Conflicts may be between individuality and being part of a community, or self- fulfillment versus the need to satisfy and serve others. At this stage, because of the tensions, there is an "anarchic" feeling and the current faith may be broken and other elements from different cultures and faith may be adopted. This may open the ground for a "more dialectical and multileveled approach to life- truth" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp.178). The fifth stage usually occurs in mid-life in which the individuals connect their "deeper self " with their particular social, religious, or ethnic group. Stage six, according to Fowler, is rare and it concerns individuals who feel that "their community is universal in extent" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 179).

- In his identity theory, Erik Erikson, identified the question, "Who am I?" as the "central task of ...the identity stage" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. xiv). According to his theory, for traditional college students, ages 18-24, "self definition becomes particularly urgent ... because of social expectations and institutions that requires them to define

themselves apart from their families and externally derived childhood self images" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. xiv). According to Arnold and King, Erikson's theory was too broad and did not mention identity issues such as those that concern minorities. This motivated other researchers such as Atkinson Morten, and Wing (Arnold and King, 1997, pp.193-204) to examine such groups. They suggest a five-stage sequential developmental model that minority groups experience in their academic environment. The first stage describes the members of the minority group as trying to avoid their own group and feeling ashamed and unappreciative, both of their group and other minority groups. These stages move slowly towards greater appreciation, and, in the last stage, they are able to articulate awareness and appreciation towards their own particular groups as well as others.

Others researchers and theoreticians investigate the contextual rather than developmental aspects that influence students' cognitive growth. There are theories that claim that students' development occurs as a result of their involvement in their environments, such as classrooms, halls, and student organization.
Astin (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 251-261,) for example, measured students' development according to their level of involvement in different aspects of their university life, how much time they dedicated to study, to interaction with peers, to student organizations, or even to establishing relationships with professors. According to

- Arnold and King, Astin's theory is "the greater the student's involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of students' learning and personal development."(Arnold and King,1997, pp. xvi)

- The other aspect that is believed to influence learners' development is embodied in the theory that claims that in different cultures the "self" is viewed differently. According to Markus and Kitayama (Arnold and King, 1997, pp.264- 288), in Western society the self is viewed independently, meaning that the individual behaves according to inner forces. In the East, however, the self is viewed as more interdependent, which means that individual behavior, in addition to inner forces, also reflects the surroundings which include, friends, family, and so on. Markus and Kitayama claim that these views influence the emotional and motivational development of individuals. In terms of cognition they claim that interdependent individuals' way of knowing depends on the views that surround them. On the other hand, independent individuals look only at their own experience as a source of reference. The same principle applies in terms of emotional development. Interdependent individuals will be more connected, familiar with their surroundings, and dependent on and willing to help others, while independent individuals will have more feelings of superiority, and self-importance. In terms of motivation, interdependent individuals will be motivated by the need to be similar to others, to nurture others, to feel part of their surroundings and to receive support from others, while independent individuals are concerned more with self-esteem. Although this theory was not developed specifically to describe the college level learners' characteristics, I agree with Arnold and King that it can be used as a framework of reference to describe them.
- In terms of the interrelationships between individuals and their surroundings, there is the Ecology of Cognitive Development theory (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 295) which posits that social, psychological, and biological factors also influence individual

development. According to this theory the developmental stage depends mainly on the level at which individuals interact with their environments, whether it is innate characteristics which invite environmental reaction to the environment, or constructing this interaction with the environment. The most complex interaction is when individuals define their beliefs through the dynamics of their relationships with their environment.

The data in my research demonstrates some of the observations that are discussed above, mainly in terms of the learners' relation to their environment, their beliefs and faith. However, since my goal is to identify the characteristics of these learners as persons and as learners, there is a need to examine additional factors.

b. The developmental stages and the interviewees.

As I mentioned earlier this research was designed primarily to focus on learners' characteristics, rather than on their developmental stages. However, while analyzing the data I realized that there are several aspects of learners' behavior and personality that appear to correlate with their developmental stages. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to present these aspects and to suggest a framework for possible interpretation of the data in this respect.

Most of the developmental theories described above clearly differentiate between "lower" and "higher" stages of development. Even those researchers who acknowledge that the stages do not necessarily occur in sequential order agree that some stages are more advanced than others. My research clearly shows that the learners of foreign languages who enroll in advanced level courses seem to exhibit a "higher" level of

development. Many times it appears to be even higher than what the researchers believe to be typical for the average college level learner.

In order to demonstrate the developmental stages of my subjects, I will use the learners' own comments regarding their motives to continue their study of the target language at the advanced level, as well as their views on their own identity. The developmental perspective that I presented earlier will provide the framework for this discussion.

According to the "Seven vectors " theory of integrative development described above, the subjects of this research can be described as ranging from stage five to stage seven.

Stage five, in which learners "establish their identity," describes several aspects of development, the most relevant of which concern learners who develop this sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context. This allows them "clarification of self concept through roles and life style " in addition to a "sense of self in response to feedback from valued others" (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 17).

When examining the learners' motives for advanced study in the target language, we find that one of their motives is their desire to strengthen their connections to their heritage. For some, the language is perceived in a religious as well as an historical context. Shelly explains that she studies Hebrew "because of my background, the Israeli aspect," and Tova claims that she learns "because of my attachment." Billy was "eager to learn Hebrew because I was still going through my post- conversion," while Rebecca admits, "I never regret it [studying Hebrew]. I consider myself Jewish and Israel is my homeland"; and David says, " Hebrew for me is part of my religion. It is just in order to

reach the goal of it ....Hebrew for me is the language of my ancestors...Israel for me, I think it is important historically." Their experience is considered as having "a profound impact," and there is a belief that "you really cannot understand what is going on in Israel and what has been happening in Judaism if you do not know Hebrew." Some clearly emphasize the historical and religious context as part of their identity Rebecca says,

> Personally, I am a type of a person whose identity has meaning. This part is what attracts me to religious studies. For me, Hebrew is a window to Judaism and [if] you want to know what Judaism is you have to talk to people, the texts the Tanach [Old Testament], Talmud, some of the things that kept the Jewish people together. It is the core of Jewish tradition and living. If you know Hebrew, you are better able to understand that realm, also the history of Israel and Israelis. It is a tool to communicate; it is a means of understanding.

For a Chinese learner, Annie, improving her Chinese was a result of her wish to "retain some of my Asian identity and I think through language is one way. I think it is really important to keep it." This is also true for one of the Japanese learners, Jill, who lives in Japan, but feels that her language skills are not good enough to have " intellectual conversation" which would make her feel more connected and integrated into the society

Learners at this stage also recognize the desire to be identified as part of their social context, and learning the target language supplies this opportunity. Billy offers, "I also decided to study Hebrew because of my friends from Young Judea [a Jewish youth group] and from my temple," or, as Shelly expresses it, to "feel more connected to the society, to be part of it, to belong, to understand." David admits, "I think I have been driven to it by taking some NEJS [Near Eastern and Judaic Studies] classes, especially since some of the people have a Yeshiva background...I am trying to catch up to the amount of knowledge they have of Hebrew.'

Paul became interested in the Chinese language as result of his interest in his social surroundings: "The area I grew up in, Southern California, had a lot of Chinese people…and in my high school I had Chinese friends …I wanted to know what people around you talked about."

What it is interesting to note is that in some cases the historical and the social context which influence the learner is not his/her actual heritage, but another culture they become attached to, which fits their life. Brice, who immersed himself in Chinese culture, comments,

> It was a culture not a religion; this was something that really attracted me because I have been brought up in a Jewish American culture with a religion as well, and I hated the religious part. I loved the culture part, the family, the holidays, and here I saw my [Chinese] girlfriend and her family and they had a culture. Technically they may be Buddhist, but they do not do anything completely disconnected …they had Confucian culture, respect for parents, do well in school, very similar to Jewish American culture…educational values. It all fit well and I was very comfortable. In the Usam [University seminar] class I had ZEN philosophy and Taoism. I loved it. It worked. I felt comfortable reading these people's viewpoints of life. I felt it was a very nice attitude towards life... When I read… these philosophers, Taoism philosophers, I was able to relate it to my personal life as a very nice way of looking at life, every day's situation. I felt that the Taoism and Buddhist viewpoints flow smoothly. I felt comfortable; for example, in sports there is the concept of the 'zone', when you are playing golf there are techniques that show how to bend your wrist, how far do you go back, your eyes--they are scientific ways of thinking about things and when you do it like that, it does not work very well. Whereas if you just relax, breathe, and just trust your body, it knows what to do…it is natural; you know it just happens very smoothly. When I saw it, I used to play golf analytically, and it did not work, but when you just let go, have fun, let your body do it, do not think, you enjoy the trees around you, the air and the blue sky, the ball becomes closer to the hole… you integrate it, so there is an example of the grand scheme of things.

Paul felt the same way about the Chinese culture,

> I really liked the food, and I really like Taoism. It is the way all things are happening according to a way and you let yourself flow with the

> way…dealing with things as they come. It is more natural, …right; it fits my personality.

He believes that he likes the tradition and the history of the Chinese culture because it is ancient, and it fascinates him that next year, while studying in China for a semester, he "will be in a culture that is thousands of years old." Another Chinese learner, Lee, notes that adopting the Chinese culture was a result of his familiarity and his admiration for Asian culture in general. He expresses his deep attachment to the culture by saying, " If there is such thing of reincarnation, I was Chinese in another life." He also admires the fact that it is so old as well as the beauty of the culture's expression in literature, philosophy, and poetry. He admits that this beauty touches "the spiritual side in me." He also "values the Chinese culture" and it influences his lifestyle; he thinks about characters, listens to radio programs about Chinese culture, searches the Net to find sites on current Chinese topics, and covers the walls in his room with Chinese poetry and calligraphy.

The other typical reason for studying a language is related to the learners' academic or future professional choice. This wish fits with stage six that is described in the Seven Vectors theory, since it indicates that learners in this stage tend to be more focused in terms of their personal interests and goals. In this category we can also find those who are fulfilling a long-time wish by learning the language. David says: "I want to be a rabbi. I want to be a rabbi because I like studying texts so Hebrew is interwoven…this is the language I want to know." Rebecca was not clear about her future goals, but says that she "will probably continue my education and use it in some capacity, like teaching Hebrew or doing something with Hebrew, maybe studying like you

language acquisition. At this point I really do not know how am I going to use it."

Another learner of Chinese, Eli said knowing Chinese would make him

> a very valuable commodity in the job market no matter what I wanted to go into, law or business. It makes me more interesting, it give me more opportunities in the world...opportunities to work in China...something interesting, even foreign service.

Three of the learners of Japanese also see potential professional value to their language learning. They hope to do business in Japan, although they can not specify exactly in what way.

Still relating to stage six, others focus on fulfillment of their personal gratification from the advanced language learning. Most of the learners say in many ways on several occasions: "I always wanted to learn"; " I love studying", "I really enjoyed it so much." "I got excited, it is terrific"; "I am happy studying languages, cultures and that kind of things." Other goals related to this stage can be stated in terms of ability to function in the learned language, "be able to read books and newspaper," or speaking the language: "The only thing I discover through Chinese is to talk to Chinese people."

In addition to the above, at this stage learners seem to be more focused in terms of using the language to strengthen their family relations. For some, it is a long- term commitment. "I always would want the language to be part of the connection between my children and me." There are those who hope to improve their familial relationships in the present and the future. Shelly admits,

> I can talk Hebrew with my mom; she uses words she will never use in English and we are actually having intellectual conversations. She is more herself with me and I am very close to her, more than my dad.

They may make some family related discoveries through the language; Tova discovered that her "mother is very interested in Hebrew literature. I never knew it until I started studying it."

Annie admits that learning Chinese literature helped to bring her mother closer to her: " That was for myself because my mom, actually both of my parents, speak more Chinese than English." She also hopes "to pass it down to my children." Rebecca hopes that her knowledge of Japanese will help her to communicate better with her Taiwanese grandparent who was educated in Taiwan during the Japanese occupation, and therefore "can express himself better in Japanese if he writes or has a deep thought."

Some of the subjects' views may indicate development as high as stage seven, the highest level in the Seven Vectors theory. In stage seven, learners move one step further to develop their integrity by developing their own principles and humanistic values that guide them in their individual and social behavior, and which also lead them to respect others.

They are "using principled thinking in balancing one's self interest with the interests of one's fellow human beings" in addition to "...affirming core values and beliefs while respecting other points of view," and "matching personal values with socially responsible behavior" (Chickering and Reisser in Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 19).

For example, Tova has the conviction that Hebrew "is a cultural language. The language is incredibly expressive. One word can mean so many different things and you can have all those meanings at the same time." However, it is interesting to note that this conviction sometimes is reflected in intolerance towards her native tongue, "the language I do not see is English." And she adds, "My ex-boy friend did not speak Hebrew. I felt that he did not understand, that to me AHAVA [love] was more real than 'love' because the word 'love' was overused and in Hebrew it is not." Her attachment to the language made her decide that

> The Old Testament's different stories...I can make it part of my life .. a dramatic experience ... When we were reading Noah last year, I was going through a personal hard time. The question of why we are here gave me a whole new way of looking at what am I doing and at my life. I take Hebrew poetry and literature very personally ...When I read it I feel, and in English not as much.

David expresses his belief in his Jewish life-style by convincing his family to follow him:

> I am non observant and Jewish. It [being a Jew] was not an obligation, but something I went to almost as a Civic duty. My family, they are missing something. My mom has now become more active...I do not put pressure on anyone. I think they see that it is important to them. I feel good about it because I think that an American's life is pretty superficial sometimes...Judaism for me is a lifestyle. It's a community; it is a way of relating to God. Community for me, I guess, it is part of my identity, the people I choose to associate with, people who I feel comfortable with and I have the most in common.

Again, David at this stage, is developing his own values, and trying to influence others to accept them as well. At this stage, the level of development is also demonstrated by the ability of the learners to respect others' beliefs and ideas. Tova, who did not respect her native language and culture, nonetheless shows respect for her mother's ideas. "She [my

mother] sees it [Hebrew literature] however very differently than I do. We have a great time discussing it and we respect each other ideas and different perspectives."

Some subjects view the humanistic value of the language through the fact that it touches them as human beings. As Tova says; "It is a very romantic kind of situation the language. I am much more emotional with the Hebrew. Hebrew is much more meaningful to me."

Others have a high opinion of the humanity of the people who speak the target language as their native tongue. Tova claims that "Israelis to me are much more emotional passionate people, as opposed to Americans who could care less. Hebrew fits the people in Israel." Rebecca also admits that she has "a lot respect" for Israelis. Betty sees the Japanese as "interesting" and the "most wonderful people I know" and Eleanor sees the Japanese as "polite, clean, and smart".

Developing their independent social behavior as a result of developing their own principles may mean rebelling against the norms of their own cultural surroundings. Tova declares:

> I learn a lot more from literature in an academic setting than just saying prayers which are meaningless to me…I know that those going to temple are so proud of themselves sitting there…On Yom Kippur I fast, but no temple. Instead of spending three hours there and fighting for parking space, I can sit and think about what Yom Kippur means to me, which is more productive.

Studying Chinese distinguished Eli from his surrounding since "it is not very common …everyone speaks Hebrew. I am around Hebrew speaking people"

Many interviewees justify their desire to learn the language by stating their belief that this is the only way to really understand the culture and the ideas that this language represents. Betty, for example declares,

> each language has something to offer that can be expressed only in that one language and I do not believe that translations carry everything over…I like to understand ideas and that the only way you can understand it is by studying another language.

Many of the interviewees have developed a set of beliefs that influence and guide them and help them to make sense of their lives. The common thread among these principles is their efforts to get close to what they understand is the "correct" or "truthful" way of life. For example, Rebecca sees the connection between success and "doing what you really love." She claims that "to be successful and happy in your life you need to follow stuff in your heart", which for her means religious studies. She admits that when she enrolled for her undergraduate studies, she certainly looked to study something "practical." However she came to the conclusion that "the most practical choice is really to look inside yourself and she does not study for practical reasons. "I do not necessarily want to get somewhere in life, I want to learn." Learning meaningfully is also a principle that guided another interviewee, Brice. He took Spanish in high school, however "I got bored with it and I stopped. I did not study language in my senior year." He is also very angry with his Hebrew teachers at his local synagogue. "They taught us to read Hebrew, but not to understand… It was useless; who came up with this philosophy?" When he came to Brandeis to complete his pre-medical education, he came to believe that he "should not waste time, a single moment of time, doing something I do not love." He found, after almost completing his pre-medical program requirements that he loves the "Chinese

stuff" and he quit his pre- medical program and joined the East Asians Studies program. As a result, he turned down his acceptance for early admission to medical school and looked for other areas such as literature and acting to find his happiness. He tells how becoming an actor was "really fun" and he is "happy", and "why not do it completely, why waste any single moment of time doing something I do not love, why even bother?"

Some learn to appreciate other cultures. Brice stated "I would like to spend a lot of time with Chinese people to see things through their eyes." His appreciation of the Chinese language also stems from

> the human value that attaches to this. It is human; it teaches you what it is to be a human being, what human life has to offer. Studying culture teaches you how dear and amazing life can be seeing it through other eyes. I love its aesthetic value and it ties into the philosophy …it is not aesthetic in a sense that this is artificial. It is all embedded; the Chinese language when you write the word rain it feels like it rains.

It is interesting to hear how learners of Japanese from Korean and Taiwanese backgrounds learn to respect the Japanese language and its culture in spite of the historical enmity between them. The cruel Japanese occupation left many people angry, including some family members of the interviewees. In spite of this, they could separate themselves from the past without dismissing the negative side of it. Betty is helped by the fact that she knows Japanese people on a personal level who have helped her to understand that she is "mad at the Japanese government …but it has nothing to do with the people in general. It was the decision of the Emperor." It does not prevent her from admiring the Japanese language. "I love the language because there are different ways to express things and judge people's status…" Japanese is…"honorable, polite, humble, and plain," and on the other hand, she can criticize Japanese society for being so "racist and

sexist." The two Korean learners who study Japanese feel that they can do so in spite of the past, since they did not go through the tough time and they belong to the new trend of Koreans who "are more accepting …they are more open about Japanese." They also admire the Japanese because of their "politeness, they are clean people, and smart; they came up with their technology. It is something we should all learn from." Poen made it clear by saying," I have anti-Japanese feelings, but I love the culture and I have many Japanese friends. I am not pro-Japan or anything, I remember what happened, but I try to make things better, I want to improve relations". Thus, in terms of the Seven Vectors theory, one can see that the subjects of my study can be categorized as demonstrating higher levels of developmental growth.

In terms of the "Ego Development" theory, as I mentioned earlier, Weathersby (Arnold and king, 1997, pp. 23) claims that, according to Loevinger's previous research and her current longitudinal study, most traditional college-age learners move from the self-awareness stage to the conscientious stage. Although the subjects in my research clearly possess some characteristics of the self-awareness stage, my data suggests that the subjects generally fall under the category of the conscientious stage. It also indicates in my opinion some characteristics of higher stages, such as the autonomous stage, the individual stage (which is a transition stage between the conscientious stage and the autonomous stage) and even of the integrated stage. What it is interesting to note is that while in the self-awareness stage there is a concern with more concrete issues; the higher stages deal with more profound and abstract levels of concern.

According to Weathersby, Loevinger claims that in the self-awareness stage:

> an individual develops an increasing self-awareness, an ability to think in terms of alternatives, exceptions, and multiple possibilities in situations.

> Students at this stage are sometimes painfully aware of their separation in relation to social groups, they are concerned primarily with taking advantage of opportunities, solving problems, finding reasons for the way life works, and adjusting to situation and roles. (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 23, 24).

In terms of choices and alternatives at the awareness stage, we can examine the learners' belief that knowing a language will help them in their future careers. Although many of them claim that job opportunities were not the main motive behind their language learning, they still do not negate the possibility of using it in their future professions. Some are clearer than others in terms of what exactly they might do with the language. Poen, a learner of Japanese, thinks that he "will do business" using the language, while Eleanor, another learner of Japanese, knows that she will use the language while doing business in Korea with Japanese tourists. "There are a lot of Japanese tourists coming to Korea, and in hotels almost everyone can speak Japanese." Rebecca, a learner of Hebrew, is still looking for ways to use it, although she has "decided ...to find a way to use it", and she finds this resolve to be " the most important thing I decided"; she is not sure yet how, "teaching Hebrew...maybe studying... consulting...or living in Israel". David knows that knowing Hebrew will help him to become a rabbi. Tova hopes to teach it and Billy might use it along with French, which is his major language, as a translator that he hopes to become. Jill knows that in the fashion business, Japan has an important role, " If I went to work in a company like in Tokyo, I think it will come handy." Eli intends to use Chinese in his future "international" career, maybe as a lawyer.

Betty's separation from her family in Taiwan was very dramatic for her and she admits that whenever she talks abut it she tends to cry. As a teenager, her parents sent her and her younger sister to study in New York. Being far from her parents during her

crucial years of development makes her sad; however, she realizes how this move gave her opportunities for academic advancement and a better future. She appreciates the richness of the liberal American educational system: " I had the most wonderful education." While in Taiwan she "did not have much of a life" as a result of the educational system there. This is an example of how one individual at the awareness stage can overcome the pain of separation through understanding the benefits of the situation.

In the "Conscientious stage", the next higher stage,

> individual lives according to self evaluated standards. Rules are not absolute. Exceptions and contingencies are recognized and reasoning is more complex and based on analytical patterns. Students at this stage would be concerned about responsibility and multiple relationships; would see the individual as having real choices in life; would value achievement highly and be concerned with self-respect; or in a social context. Individuals in this stage understand psychological causation and development over time; they also have deeper and more differentiated self- understanding. (Weathersby, in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 25)

According to Weathersby, in this stage learners view their education as more significant to their inner life. The main importance of learning "lies in intellectual stimulation and enrichment" (Weathersby, in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 30). This is a positive experience for them that influenced their life, makes learning more enjoyable, and at the same time leads to the recognition that education should be accessible to all the people since it is a force that can improve society. While examining the learners' motivations and their reasons for studying the target language at the advanced level, we can identify these same views. For example, for Tova learning Hebrew is an enriching experience both intellectually and emotionally. She cannot see English as rich, since Hebrew is "a cultural language...incredibly expressive....the language I do not see in English." For Brice,

Chinese is a language that can enrich him culturally and, at the same time, make him happier: " I saw my [Chinese] girl friend and her family and they had a culture…and I was comfortable." It was a sharp contrast to his experience as a learner of his heritage language, Hebrew, which did not give him the same satisfaction: "They taught us to read Hebrew but not to understand …it was useless, who came up with this philosophy?" He decided to concentrate on the Chinese language and in East Asia studies, and in addition to his Chinese studies, to enjoy every opportunity to enhance his learning. He joined the theater group, read literature, and enjoyed being different from what he was before. He went to Berkley for a summer and intends to go to China next year "to study the language through culture, with an emphasis on philosophy, tai-chi, visualization, and a little acupuncture. The subjects in this study tend to believe that others should benefit from the positive influence that they experience through their learning experience. David, for example, believes that by being immersed in Jewish studies he will influence his family as well. He encourages them to become members of the local Jewish community, because he believes that by only being part of the American culture, they are missing something, because the "American life is pretty superficial sometimes".

There is an ideological side to Tova's wish to teach Hebrew, to improve the state of Hebrew language instruction: "I see that it failed miserably … there are still so many wonderful ways of learning Hebrew." Some of the subjects develop their own way of viewing the world and their surroundings by creating their own rules. These attitudes range from how they arrange their academic lives to the way they evaluate common values. In addition, when we examine their explanations regarding their views, we become aware of their ability to

understand themselves as well as to articulate that understanding in an analytical way and to act upon their decisions. For example, Brice and Lee created their own independent study programs so they could achieve their goals, and David concentrated only on what is meaningful to him in his studies. He rejected the ways in which his classmates tried to analyze an Israeli poem in his literature course, "What bothers me the most is that people sometimes pull meanings out of them that are absurd to me." His originality in thinking against the common trend is also expressed in the way he views the role of the Kotel (the Western Wall) in Jewish culture; "This is too much emphasis on Jerusalem holier than any other place in the world. I think it is absurd, worshipping the Kotel. Jewish religion is supposed to be devoid of idols." Unlike a typical student, Tova declares that grades were never a concern for her; what she cares about is the enjoyment of learning and truthful academic relationships with her professors: " I do not care about grades. I take classes from professors I like…I write papers so I can give something back to the teacher, a new idea, a new perspective." As I mentioned earlier, Tova also refuses to express her Jewishness according to the general custom, and does so in her own way, which she believes is the most truthful to her. In converting to Judaism during his high school years, Billy demonstrated integrity and the courage to follow his conviction. His decision to convert came from a conviction that he still holds that " in Catholicism, it was this is it, don't question,….One of the things I like about Judaism is that everything is straight forward." Interesting enough, Billy broke his religious ties with his family as a result of studying a chapter in his high school history book

about the Holocaust. His curiosity led him to become acquainted with Jewish history and religion.

Additionally, Brice did not hesitate to follow his dreams and to turn against his family's desire to see him become a medical doctor: "I had said 'screw it all' even though I got into medical school. They gave me an acceptance and I turned it down." Paul also discontinued his plans to become a Biology major: "I did not see the purpose in doing research in Bio". These are clearly examples that the subjects are independent thinkers in terms of Conscientious Stage.

The next higher stage, the Individualistic Stage, is a transition to the Autonomous Stage. In terms of viewing education at this stage, Weathersby posits that "the focus is shifting to education as a lifelong process essential for a full life" (Weathersby, in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 31). We can see that in terms of language learning, most of the interviewees admitted that being learners of language at the advanced level is a long-term process that they need to go through. More than that for many of them, learning a language is a conscious part of their daily routine and they articulate that learning the target language is part of their life-style. For example, Lee takes every opportunity to immerse himself in the Chinese language, as well as in the Persian culture that he adores. Even if it means losing sleep over it, he listens to radio programs about Chinese culture at all hours. He teaches himself ancient Chinese so he can read poetry, and in addition, he confesses, " I will spend the nights...reading about the interaction between painting and poetry in Chinese." Tova confides that teaching Hebrew for her means " a life-long thing". Jill constantly studies grammar on her own. Betty is going to Japan to complete

her study. David cannot imagine being a Jew without learning Hebrew " because it is such an important thing in Jewish life." Bill also sees the language as a permanent component in his life since it is part of his heritage and part of Israel, "a Jewish homeland and a place I feel connected to... and perhaps consider living there." Lee also sees the possibility of living in China and maybe becoming an "academic, an intellectual historian, probably in modern Chinese history." Brice believes that his commitment to the language still has a long way to go since he admits, " I feel that I am starting now." For him and for Lee their life-long commitment to the language means also a life-long commitment to other cultural components. Lee cannot wait until he starts to study Persian and Brice wants to study Japanese, "which is a more aesthetic language than Chinese." Poen hopes to work to improve relations between Korea and Japan. For Annie, the language is a family experience that she will also try to pass on to her children as part of their cultural understanding. Tova will need to use the language in her relations with her future husband and children. Shelly still hopes to convince her father to communicate with her in Hebrew, since she believes that better understanding with him can be established by using his native language. Rebecca might live in Israel, but her main commitment to the language comes from her deep commitment to Judaism and she says that Hebrew "is the window into the Jewish people," including the Jewish text and Israeli culture, which she is anxious to continue to study. The students at this stage demonstrate that they appreciate the process of learning for its contribution to their intellectual development and for its enjoyment. Shelly "loves studying it." Rebecca declares that she "really loves it" and she feels " totally alive" when she learns it. Eleanor expresses her wish to improve her Japanese "more than any other of my other pals." And she adds that

it is "a subject that I want to continue…I enjoy the most." Annie says that she "loves the language" and also feels pride in speaking Chinese since "so many people speak the language and I can take part in it." Poen feels that because Japanese is a hard language to understand, "It is exciting." Paul likes speaking the language the most; it makes him feel " kind of needed and more communicative." Brice found "passion in Chinese " and he feels "happy" to study it and speak it with friends. Lee's plans to study abroad make him "very, very happy' and he is "very, very excited."

The above examples show the learners' commitment to the language and that they view this learning as an intellectual challenge as well as a enjoyable process.

The Autonomous Stage and the Integrated Stage are the highest stages compared by the "Ego Development" theory. In the Autonomous Stage, learners tend to reflect

> another restructuring of personality ….one can analyze one's social group and other social systems and make choices and commitments despite an awareness of the complexity and social forces at work. An ability to acknowledge inner conflict is the hallmark of this stage… The autonomous individual also respects other autonomy…while valuing interdependence" ((Weathersby, in Arnold and King, 1997, p.25)

From the data gathered for this research, it seems that many of the interviewees fall under the category of the Autonomous Stage. Many of them have the ability to analyze their own social groups and to make choices in terms of their commitments. It is clear that Brice hated his Jewish upbringing and chose to become involved in the Taoism framework which he appreciates very much, having found Judaism not "spiritually fulfilling." He was aware that in his parents' eyes he was seen as very "weird." Nonetheless, he continues since his

"happiness" is very important to him. Even dropping out of the pre-med track, which left his parents and his girlfriend disappointed, he continues to pursue his way, trying to cope with the conflict he has created. Poen is constantly revising his social values, and is willing to change whenever it makes sense to him. Now he has adopted Taoism; however, in the future he will "take up the religion of his wife." Both Eleanor and Poen are Koreans, who have the courage to study Japanese in a period in which many might view them as traitors.

Poen also feels the need to explain that he is not "pro-Japan", but that he admires the art, the music, and the technology that is being produced in Japan. Tova does not agree with the traditional rituals of the Jewish tradition and chooses to concentrate on Jewish literature and history that can complete her Jewish identification, finding it "more productive." She does not hesitate to hold these views while living among students at Brandeis who are " going to temple…so proud of themselves, sitting there." Lee did not hesitate to move from one social system to another in order to find the truth. From a Jew who studied the Bible, he became a youth leader in a Christian church, tried to become a Moslem, and even for a short period, became a follower of Hari Krishna. Billy found Judaism to be more inclusive that his Christianity and therefore converted, becoming the only Jew in his family and his neighborhood. David finds the American society to be "superficial" and therefore prefers to belong to a Jewish community. This ability to separate elements of society demonstrates in my opinion, the subjects' ability to analyze and make choices in terms of the social systems they are identifying through learning the language. It

seems to me that the issue of identity as a conscious preoccupation is expressed through the interviews. They still do not have a consolidated sense of their identity, but there is no doubt that many of them can clearly define their identity at this time.

In general, they are using four types of criteria to define their identity: religion, nationality, culture, and the notion of truth. Shelly, for example, claims that she relates more to Israeli culture than to Judaism. David sees himself as more of a "civic" Jew, meaning a secular Jew, who prefers the company of other Jews whom give him the sense of belonging. Billy chooses to become a Jew, since it is a very "logical" way of life and, in addition, "brings people together." He is aware that as a converted Jew he is not like the others who come from a " long line of Judaism."

Eli who studies Chinese does not even question his Jewishness and his Zionist feelings. Brice abandoned his Jewishness to become culturally Taoist as " a new viewpoint ... the way I see my life... a key inserted in my life." to understand himself better. Lee abandoned all the religions he tried and studied, and he now understands that he used religion "to understand myself... to understand the world." He came to the conclusion that he did not "need a religion any more," and became an atheist: "I strongly accept the existentialist philosophy." In his sophomore year, he came to understand that "one can not see that any truth is not in some distant place, that any truth that is relevant to the human experience is within the human spirit and so the truth of our existence is around us." He cleared from his eyes all the religious dogmas that conditioned his

way of understanding the truth. The need to free himself from dogmas made him feel free from identifying himself in terms of the nationality he officially has: Jamaican, English and American.

Others create a combination of culture and nationality. Annie feels that she is Asian- American, but she identifies "more with American... I do not have any national thing towards China." Jill has three nationalities, but emotionally feels that she is an American since when she is in Japan among Japanese, she does not feel that she belongs. Betty feels more Taiwanese in America, but in Taiwan, she feels more American, since she is aware of the fact that she is "Americanized in many ways." Although Eleanor has British citizenship, she is more Korean, since she "keeps the Korean culture."

Weathersby claims that according to Loevinger (Arnold and King, 1997, p 25) the Integrated stage is "rare and therefore difficult to study." This stage adds to the Autonomous Stage "reconciliation of inner conflicts in a more consolidated sense of identity. Identity is a conscious preoccupation, and interpersonal relations reflect cherishing of individuality within the broadest possible context human life" (Weathersby in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 25). Weathersby writes that in terms of education the Autonomous Stage and the Integrated Stage are combined.

Many of the subjects in this research demonstrate some characteristics of these two higher categories in the way they view the role of their language learning at the advanced level. Weathersby claims that in both stages, education "is seen as leading to a deep understanding of oneself and others, as helping to cope with life, as leading to creativity, self fulfillment and deeper values; hence education is intrinsically valuable"

(Weathersby in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 31). She also emphasizes the fact that education is viewed as a process that is also connected to the life "outside the classroom or school, and involves interpersonal relations and emotional involvements" (Weathersby, in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 31).

Indeed, many of the subjects admitted that learning the target language and its culture helped to clarify, enrich, and define the above issues. Many of them see the language as a tool to communicate better with loved ones they want to get to know better and with who to create better relations. Shelly finds it a key to understand her mother, and so does Annie who admits that when she learns something new in her Chinese class, she " would ask my mom about it, talk to her. She says that that "it brings my mom a little closer." Tova discovered her mother's ability to analyze Israeli literature when they speak in Hebrew. The idea that the language enhances the possibility of communicating outside the classroom with "real " people excites Eli and Paul. Eli feels that talking in Chinese to people in China, "random people," is "very interesting to me," and Paul goes to China- town to talk to this "lady from Szechwan." Betty cannot wait to go to Japan to use her language skills in real-life situations. Tova, like others, believes that her attachment to the language originated from the fact that the Hebrew opened her to ideas that speak to her, made her understand herself better, "the Tanach, different stories. I can make it part of my life … dramatic experience." She admits that she takes Hebrew poetry "very personally ….when I read it, I feel." Brice shares the same experience with the Chinese language and philosophy which make him feel that "a nice attitude towards life ..something that I never have been shown before." He feels "comfortable" using the principles of his philosophy at all levels of his life and it caused him to change the course

of his life entirely. For Rebecca, the language is a window to Judaism, which includes both talking to Jewish people around the world and " the texts, the Tanach, [Old Testament] Talmud ...that kept the Jewish people together." And since she is a person "whose identity has meaning" she finds learning Hebrew is a way to enhance her life with meaningful content. Some of the subjects admitted that they have emotional connection to the language. Tova can cry about a piece of Israeli literature, and feels that a Hebrew words are a better way to express meaning. Lee cannot sleep at night unless he discovers the meanings of a Chinese character, and Brice believes, that in Chinese, looking at the character that expresses the meaning "rain", "feels like rain really". Betty admits that learning Japanese has made her more open to people.

There is no doubt that these expressions of life-enriching feelings about the language indicate that most of these subjects at the advanced level, find the language intellectually stimulating as well as emotionally enriching. By reading ancient texts or discovering the variety of people behind the language or even by enjoying the nuances of the target language, they are learning at the advanced level. Some like Billy are amazed by the root system of the Hebrew language and the fact that there are expressions that are representing the Israeli culture. Others, like Betty, love the ambiguity of the Japanese language " because there are different ways to express things;" all these possibilities excite her "because you can play with them." Rebecca decided to enhance her Judaic studies as a result of studying Hebrew, and Lee is studying independently the ancient version of Chinese so he can read ancient Chinese poetry. Brice finds Chinese to be his "door " to Asia, and he plans to study more Asian language.

We can see that in terms of the Ego Development Theory, there is much evidence to show that these learners of foreign language at the advanced level fall at the traditional developmental stage of most college level students. However, many of them possess qualities that indicate that their developmental level may be higher than the average level of traditional age of college students. Evidence suggests that these learners of less commonly taught languages at the advanced level may be motivated to study the language as a result of the higher level of their developmental stages.

c. Cognitive Development.

There are several theories that describe the cognitive development typical of traditional college age learners. In the following analysis of the cognitive development of my interviewees, I chose to concentrate on theories that seemed clearly relevant to the data of my research. The theories that I believe to be relevant are Perry's theory regarding cognitive and ethical growth, Magolda's theory regarding students' epistemologies and academic experiences, and Fowler's theory of moral stages and the development of faith. In order to relate these theories to the level of the research subjects I will identify the profile of the learners in these terms.

Perry claims that there are several levels of cognitive development. The highest level that is described in his theory is the commitment level at which learners tend to make decisions regarding their choices in life, mainly by narrowing their interests to either one or several areas. Perry characterizes this commitment as accompanied by "the awareness of some sort of internal spiritual strength." This commitment is either to "a set of values or …to a person or… to a career." When more than one commitment is

established "it becomes necessary to balance them, to establish priorities among commitments with respect to energy, action, and time" (Perry, in Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 64-66)

While examining the subjects' choices in their academic lives there is no doubt that most of them are dealing with different levels of commitments. One expression of this phenomenon is their choice to study the target language at the advanced level. This commitment was made either as result of understanding of the central role of the language in their present, or the belief that it will be one of the components that will help them shape their future.

The spiritual strength of this commitment is obvious among several subjects. Rebecca's appreciation of the people in Israel and their language has a spiritual dimension; she feels, "I have special place in my heart for the people who live in Israel." For Billy, the spiritual strength ties into his whole decision to convert to Judaism and the way he feels about the religious rituals: "When I went to services, it was very hard; I had to read the translation; it was very hard to do it during services, so I was very excited to finally learn to read Hebrew, and I also saw something that will help me in the long run." Tova's emotions towards the Hebrew language were a result of her learning Biblical Hebrew and Israeli poetry in which she discovered that the language can express the issues that concern her personal life. She admits "I feel more in Hebrew and think more in English." Paul ties the Chinese language to his admiration of the Taoist philosophy and the feelings that it creates, which are expressed in the language: " It is more natural,...more relaxed ... a kind of simplicity." Lee describes his deep feelings about Chinese saying that he "loves Chinese" and that "Chinese was always a love of mine"

The commitment to a set of values is clear in the following subjects' responses: Rebecca declares, " I am a type of person whose identity has meaning." She believes that "Hebrew is a window into Judaism," and therefore she pursues learning the language. Peter appreciates the tradition and history of China, which, unlike his is "a culture that's thousands of years old," and that is "less materialistic." Eli views foreign language learning as a way to explore and learn about other cultures through experimenting. This is an act he considers "novelty." In this process of learning, he appreciates both the people and the places that represent the other culture. He admits that "talking to people" excites him as well as giving him an opportunity to appreciate a place and its people. The value of learning a foreign language is also emphasized for him by learning through people and places, which makes him more "knowledgeable" and gives him more "depth." Lee "value[s] the Chinese culture," in addition to the fact that he has "much more respect for Chinese" including ancient Chinese, and Chinese poetry, than for other languages. His unconditional passion and dedication to the Chinese language fits with his belief that one should not search for the truth in "distance places", but in your heart. Therefore following your passion seems to be his motto; he allows himself to be "obsessed" and passionate with a language that represent a human sprit that he values so much.

Poen learned Japanese as part of his appreciation of the Japanese people and their values, mainly their popular culture. Betty admires the way in which the Japanese language represents the values of the culture such as honor, politeness and modesty, as well as to express respect for the different status that exist in the Japanese society.

We can also find that some subjects' commitment to the target language is a result of their commitment to particular people in their lives.

Rebecca, for example, studies the language out of and respect for all Jewish people, including the Israelis. "I have a lot of respect for the people who live in Israel…I care a lot about the Jewish people". Tova and Shelly view their commitment to Hebrew as part of their commitment to strengthening their relationships with their parents, especially their mothers. Tova expresses her respect for her mother who "just spoke to us in Hebrew from a very early age" and, thanks to her, " I am studying Hebrew at age 20," In addition, she has a commitment to her Israeli grandparents, who have unconditional love for her, and even to the Israeli people in general, who in her mind are very passionate people, and therefore, "Hebrew fits the people in Israel." Paul started to study Chinese as a step to get closer to his Asian friends, and especially his girl friend. He seems to have strong commitments to people he loves. Paul's tendency to go and study Chinese in Taipei is also a result of his loyalty to friends who first taught him Chinese.

For Annie, learning Chinese means an opportunity to discuss their Chinese culture with her mom, and talking to her, "brings my mom a little bit closer." Eleanor is committed to her Japanese teacher who "works very hard and I feel bad if I do not work hard. …if we do not work hard it is like she is wasting her time on us." Jill drills herself in Japanese grammar out of respect for her father, who by profession is a translator, "and it annoys him when I talk in my colloquial." Betty feels that Japan is "a dream land" for her, and "Japanese people to me are interesting; the ones that I have met are the most wonderful people that I know." In addition she is committed to her teacher in the same way as Eleanor, and feels that if she does not "do it [study well] she will be disappointed and she put so much work and effort, because she cares."

For a few, another commitment that is revealed in the interviews is the commitment to a career, although this is not the maim motivation of these students.

Rebecca made the decision to use the language in her future career: "I decided for myself that I need to find a way to use it." David clearly sees the language commitment as part of his commitment to his future career as a rabbi, and since he sees "Hebrew ...as important religiously," it will be part of his "identity." Tova would like to teach Hebrew: "There are still so many wonderful ways to learn Hebrew," and she wants to use them in her future teaching career. For Lee the commitment to use the language in the future is not in a simple sense of having a career, but to adopt the language and its learning in a way of life, " I will end up as an academic, an intellectual historian." Eleanor is clearly committed to use Japanese in her future job as an economist, " I am going to do business ...I will have to deal with Japanese people." Poen is also hoping to become a businessman, and will "try to do businesses with Japanese." Jill also thinks about Japanese as a tool to be used in her future career.

Viewing the commitment to the language as one among many other commitments, and the need to balance them, Shelly would like to pursue a career in economics and she will need to find ways to incorporate Hebrew into her life outsides of her career, using Hebrew with her children. Others feel that the target language is only one language among others to which they are committed. Billy studies Hebrew at the advanced level, as well as French, German, and Spanish. While French is the language he will use in his future career, it is clear to him that Hebrew will be part of this future too, although he still does not know how. In the meantime, in the near future he says that he would want "to have one Hebrew class at least every semester." Poen is studying both

Chinese and Japanese. Lee is committed to learning Persian, and Jill basically is more committed to French. Eli is starting to learn Russian, and Betty knows that next year she will go back to learning Spanish, a commitment she has needed to fulfill since her high school years.

The above description clearly shows that these students have a vast range of commitments in addition to learning the language and its culture. According to Perry's theory, the existence of such commitments among the learners demonstrates their high level of cognitive development.

The other cognitive theory that can serve as a framework to characterize these learners in advanced less commonly taught foreign language courses, is the theory developed by Magolda. (Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 117-139). In her research, Magolda examined students' epistemologies and academic experience. She found that there are three levels at which traditional college learners view their learning experience. This experience is a sum of different components which include the evaluation of the nature of the knowledge that the learners acquire, the role of their teachers and peers in the learning process, as well as the methods that are used to teach and to learn. According to Magolda, the highest level of knowing is when learners reach the third level, "the independent knowers." Learners at this stage tend to "think for themselves" and develop "their own beliefs"(Magolda, in Arnold and King, 1997, p.121). This group of learners usually supports each other in the developing their independent thinking with the encouragement of the instructors. While examining my subjects' views and descriptions regarding the way they learn the target language, it seems to me that we can find that most of them share the characteristics of this highest level.

According to Magolda, as a result of understanding the uncertainty of the knowledge, learners at this level tend to develop "a variety of beliefs, largely defined as thinking for oneself" (Magolda, in Arnold and King, 1997, p.123). It is interesting to note that for the various subjects of my research, learning the target language is a result of their independent thinking and their beliefs. For example, four learners of Japanese had to overcome their general anti-Japanese feelings. Their ability to separate their knowledge from their feelings and to view the Japanese people and the Japanese culture independently proves them to be independent knowers. Betty claims that, as a Taiwanese, she recognize how her nation "suffered for 50 years from the Japanese" and that Taiwanese

> were not able to speak our own language, were forced to learn a difficult language, were forced to learn a different culture and being second class citizens....it is in the textbook, how many were killed and how and what happened ...I am still mad at the Japanese government [but]...it has nothing to do with the people in general".

In spite of all this, she can maintain that "Japanese is such an interesting language and Japan is an interesting society". Eleanor and Poen, who are Korean, find themselves in the same position. They both know much about the history between Korea and Japan and recognize the evil that was done to the Koreans by the Japanese; however, they also learned to separate their interest in the language and the culture from this awareness. Eleanor admits that she is "constantly reminded that her people are anti-Japanese...[but] I want communication." Poen, on the other hand, admits that he still has anti- Japanese feelings, but he likes "the culture and the Japanese people." For Paul and Brice, their uncertainty about their ability to apply knowledge they acquired in their science major

made them change their goals and become East Asian majors, studying Chinese. Lee's extensive knowledge of different religions made him uncertain regarding the ability of a religion to answer his question regarding the "truth" in life. Tova found many uncertainties regarding how to be a Jew, and therefore decided to adopt her own way that is more meaningful for her " I learn a lot more from literature in an academic setting than just saying prayers. David protests against conventional thinking about the Western Wall by declaring that "God should be everywhere" and not only in Jerusalem. He is also upset with his peers in his Hebrew literature course who tend to over analyze poems. All these students are demonstrating Magolda's views of "independent learners." The fact that many subjects have positive interaction with their instructors is also characteristic of this developmental stage. Betty appreciates her teachers' effort; who can "see through the students" and she pushes each student according to his/her level by giving each of them "different material" including poems that "make her cry." Eleanor also praises her sensei ["teacher" in Japanese] for she "works hard to make us improve. Eleanor likes it when " we have to speak to the teacher and answer questions." Poen feels that "sensei is the best" because " she pushes you to the limit, you have to study."

Brice really appreciates his Chinese teacher for being so supportive: " I love her; she is like a friend." Eli praises his Chinese teacher for being so "open" to be "creative in Chinese." She lets them have the freedom to "talk about what we want, and the stuff we are reading is interesting." Lee is thankful to his instructor who believed in him, did not let him drop the class, and gave him good grades as encouragement for him to stay. Tova also believes she is taking the Hebrew literature course because "the professors are absolutely successful."

It is interesting to note Magolda's claims that the women in particular "value their status as knowers and want the instructor to acknowledge that value (Magolda, in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 132). In addition, women emphasize the importance of being able to express themselves, while men feel difficulties in learning in a restricted environment. For example, Betty chose to express herself through writing: "I love writing… the ability to express myself through words." Jill also admits that she is "happy" when she can write in Japanese. Tova says "I am interested in expression in every aspect: language, words…this is why I am studying Hebrew literature."

Another characteristic according to Magolda of this stage is the students' need to be recognized for their contribution. In Betty's case, the fact that the teacher gives them high-level reading assignment makes her feel recognized for her abilities "because they are real things and not for little children." Eleanor feels very proud that the Japanese teacher recommended her for a program in Japan. Poen is disappointed that his effort did not result in the grade he wanted, " just an OK grade." Although Tova does not care about grades, she is used to being recognized as a top student, and she likes it. Tova is only taking courses from professors whom she "likes" and would appreciate her ideas: "I write papers so that I can give back something to the professors." Billy is really happy to get good grades on his tests: " I feel that I really worked and done something well…"

Active involvement as the best learning strategy also characterizes learners at this stage. Betty likes to be active in class, but in her own way; she hates "role play" because it involves a lot of memorization: "I dread it-- I stutter; but I practice with a friend." Paul is very disappointed that there is not enough involvement and interaction in class. These classes have been going very, very slow." As a result he interacts outside the classroom

and admits that he learns "all the stuff …from talking outside the classroom." Brice also looks for interaction outside the classroom with the Asian- American Students Association. He feels "great" about organizing events to "show their culture to the community." He feels that there are "few people who speak Mandarin," and this is very "frustrating." He can not wait till he goes to study in China since he misses "the initiative, the stimuli" that he believes he will find there. On the other hand, Annie, who grew up in a Chinese family, was happy and surprised to find six people in her Chinese class with whom she can interact since " some people…are speaking at the same level I do." She admits that this is her preferable way of learning-- "through conversation…it is more interactive." She adds, "it is more fun to talk to people than just to read." Lee admits that the Persian culture that is expressed through its ancient literature has "such words …it touches …its the spiritual side in me." Brice claims that while learning Chinese there is a need to involve feelings in the language, since feelings are expressed in the style of the character. "At this independent stage, students also emphasize the importance of learning from peers; therefore, Betty is disappointed when those peers do not fulfill her expectations, do not prepare for the lesson so they can all be at the same level of interactions. She is also aware that such an attitude is a contradiction to the teacher's expectations: "Sensei does not have to slow down; we are basically at the same level, we can read books and get topics which are really college level." She appreciates the fact that she can learn from one of her peers. Having a Japanese peer in her class makes her realize that the level of the teaching and the learning is higher. Eleanor feels "comfortable" interacting with her peers in class, although she recognizes that it also creates "pressure" on her to participate. Jill praises her peers. As someone who came with a wide knowledge

of Japanese, she admits that she is "amazed by the students, how much they got in two years." Eli studies about the Chinese culture from his peers: "I have become more aware, [to the Chinese culture] part of it by talking to people who were there." David is happy to interact with people in his advanced Hebrew course since it helps them to " bond." In these ways Magolda's theory is appropriate in illuminating their cognitive developments and the subjects can be categorized in the highest level.

Since most of the interviews gave the subjects opportunities to express their views on a variety of topics, such as their personal lives, their beliefs, their academic experiences, there is enough data to try to understand how they view their world. This data may fit well when analyzed in the framework of Fowler's Faith Development theory. As I mentioned in the theoretical section of this paper (p. 243) according to Fowler, who bases his theory on the work of Kohlberg (Fowler at Arnold and King, 1997, p. 134),

> faith need not be approached as necessarily a religious matter. Nor need it be thought of as a doctrinal belief or assent. Rather, faith becomes the designation for a way of leaning into life. It points to a way of making sense of one's existence. It denotes a way giving order and coherence to the force field of life. It speaks of the investment of life-grounding trust and of life orienting commitments. (Fowler at Arnold and King, 1997, p. 164),

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In order to develop faith one needs to use cognitive skill since there is a need to know, construct, and interpret the environment and the relations around us so we can judge and value. According to him, faith is developed in stages and occurs in sequential order.

Fowler recognizes a transitional period between stages, each of which has it's own characteristics. In the transition period, the person acquires "readiness" for the next stage. While stage three occurs during the years of adolescence, the typical person at this stage has an "ideology" which is consistent with values; at the same time, they are willing

to reevaluate these values. In the transitional period between stage three and stage four, the person starts to question his/her ideology. According to Fowler, in this transitional period there are

> certain unavoidable tensions: individuality vs. being defined by a group or a group membership.....Subjectivity [or].....unexamined feelings vs. objectivity.....Self fulfillment...vs. service and being for others...Committed to the relative vs. struggling with the possibility of the absolute (Fowler in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 177)

In stage four, which usually occurs in young adulthood, identity may be defined independently of others, but "it composes a meaning frame conscious of its own boundaries and inner connections, and aware of itself, a "world view" (Fowler in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 177). This independence is also expressed through independent thinking and actions. It also the stage of "demythologizing" in which there is minimal behavior that is influenced by the "unconscious" (Fowler, in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 177). In my opinion, the data suggests that most of the subjects in this study can be described either in stage four or in the transitional stage between stages three and four.

Billy, for example, possesses some of the characteristics of stage four. He expressed his individuality by his decision to fulfill himself as Jew. His conversion from Christianity to Judaism was clearly made by a conscious decision to choose a religion that better suited him. It does not bother him that in his new religion he is considered different, since he did not come from "a long line of Judaism." Lee, on the other hand, moved from one religion to another believing that he would be able to understand God. His journey is a remarkable example of how he became more individualistic. While searching for the "right" religion, he discovered that this was actually a "quest that has

always been for truth; religion has only been a catalyst for the discovery of the truth". He admitted that as result "one can see that the truth is not in some distance place, that any truth that is relevant to the human experience, the truth that really matters to our existence is around us." He objects to all types of "dogmas" that can interfere with the understanding of the truth, any "conditioning," such as religion, economic status, or political regime, whether it is communism or capitalism. He believes that only by eliminating all this conditioning will we be able to see the truth in each other. Lee's desire to identify himself independently without being part of any social, or religious group, but through his inner insight, clearly testifies to his individualistic ways of fulfilling himself. Brice disconnected himself from his Jewish roots, believing that Taoism would be a better framework for his personal expression. He discovered that this philosophy is "a nice way of looking at life," and he feels comfortable adopting Tao philosophers' viewpoints of life: "This a way of life that lets you practice it in every day situations," and has viewpoints that "flow smoothly." As a result of this intellectual change, he changed his life, changed his major, broke up with his girlfriend, and freed himself from all the social and academic groups to which he had belonged. Paul also adopted the Taoist philosophy for similar reasons. He explained that he likes the idea that in this philosophy "it's the way all things happen according to a way and you also let yourself flow with the way…not letting yourself to get stressed." Eli feels that as an orthodox Jew who studied Hebrew all his life, his interest in Asian language and culture broadened his horizons: " It is another dimension to think about" and opens him to new possibilities. By doing so he has become different from the other people in his Jewish

circle, and he admitted that his world view became richer since he understands how Chinese people "deal with life."

Betty's individualistic worldview is expressed by her ability to develop a great appreciation for people who possess human values. As a Taiwanese, she is able to accept and like the Japanese people, and to direct her anger at the Japanese government. She seems to be unique in this way of thinking; within her family. But she insists that "knowing this good friend of mine [Japanese]...made a difference" to he thinking. Tova seems to have always had an individualistic approach to life. She always questioned the rules, and seemed to fight for doing things her own way. She loved Art History, but got bad grades since she did not see any logic to the way she was tested. It seems that her logic is defined by her ability to adopt it as a way of life. For example, her approach to the Jewish holidays is a result of her wish to give them a more intellectual than ritual dimension.

David also expresses his individuality when he tries to explain why he believes that Jerusalem should be de-symbolized, since, according to his Jewish understanding, "God should be everywhere." Rebecca's individualistic act was to leave her promising career in the high- tech business world, and to study something that is "meaningful" to her. Although she left her mainstream job, she declares that

> I believe in doing what you really love. I believe that to be successful and happy in life you need to follow stuff in your heart ...I came to believe that the most practical option, the most practical choice, is really to look inside yourself and figure out what are the talents that you have that you most enjoy, this is your best bet.

From the above discussions regarding the cognitive developmental stages of this group of learners at the advanced level in less commonly taught foreign language courses, the data from my research suggests that these learners are at higher stages of development, in terms of the various theories that I have presented. In order to examine this assumption more deeply, there is a need for larger and more detailed research in other contexts by experts in cognitive and developmental psychology.

d. Personal context.

This category focuses on the characteristics of the learners' context that provide elements of their personalities. Markus and Kitayama (Markus and Kitayama, in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 264) maintain that students' personalities are a result of their cultural context. Therefore, they believe that there are differences between American students' personality and the personality of Asian students. According to them, these differences are expressed in the learners' cognitive, emotional, and motivational factors. According to them, the research shows that American students tend to have more independent personalities, while the Asian students are more interdependent. An independent person tends to "view the self as an autonomous." The response to society in this case is a way to express "the internal attributes of the self." From the point of view of the independent person, the aim of interaction with others is receiving affirmation and reinforcement of the self. The interdependent person, on the other hand, views the self, "as determined, contingent on, and to a large extent organized by…others in the relationships" (Markus and Kitayama, in Arnold and King, 1997. pp. 266-267). According to this theory,

interdependency is common among "non-western students" who are "motivated to become part of interpersonal relationships" (Markus and Kitayama, in Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 266-267). In addition, the personal attributes of the interdependent "are understood as situation specific." The actions of these persons are based on the expectation of society and "social norms" rather than "internal wishes and personal attributes." The role of others in this case is more important, and "relatively focal in one's own behavior." The fulfillment of the set goals fits within the fulfillment of a selected group of members, which is their social context. (Markus and Kitayama (in Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 266-267) conclude that in terms of interpersonal knowledge, the interdependent are more "sensitive and knowledgeable about the others who are co-participants in various relationships." Their knowledge of the others will be more specific than general. However, in terms of expressing emotions, they claim that independent persons tend to posses ego focused emotions. The role of these emotions is mainly to express "internal attributes" such as anger, frustrations, satisfactions, and so on. These emotions are expressed frequently and independent persons tend to base their actions on them. On the other hand, in interdependent persons, emotions are "others focused," and do not reveal internal attributes. These emotions result from being more "sensitive of the other, taking the perspective of the others." While the independent feels more superior and self-important, the interdependent has feelings of connection, familiarity, or respect for someone else and even relying or leaning on someone.

In terms of motivations, Markus and Kitayam claim that while the independents' motives concern internal needs such as "enhancement of one's self-esteem, motive to achieve, motive to affiliate, motive to reduce cognitive conflict and the motive to self-

actualize" (in Arnold and King, 1997, pp. 279-280), the interdependents, on the other hand, are motivated to achieve in order "to fit into a group and meet the expectations of the group," usually a family. In terms of self -related motives, while the independents tend to express the need to be independent selves by "being unique" or separate from others, the interdependent again feel "positive feeling about the self" by "fulfilling the tasks associated with being interdependent with relevant others, belonging, fitting in, occupying one's proper place, engaging in appropriate action, promoting others' goals" (Markus and Kitayama, in Arnold and King, 1997, p. 282). They also measure their academic ability in relation to the group that give them approval for their achievements

The perception that Western college students have different personality traits from non-Western college students is particularly interesting in the context of my research. Among my interviewees was a group of five students who have Asian backgrounds. While Markus and Kitayama claim that most Western students are independent and non-Western are interdependent, as result of their cultural differences, I believe that the data from my research show that in essence all my interviewees possess similar personality characteristics, neither purely independent nor interdependent. It seems that while most of the time they possess independent qualities, in one area, the emotional, all of them demonstrate the quality of the interdependent personality. Tova is an example of a Western student who fits these qualities. The data suggests that she views her inner attributes as the central motivation to study the language, "I study Hebrew to find myself." It gave her direction since the materials she is studying provide her with a whole new way to look at herself, "to look at what I am doing and at my life." She also believes that knowing the language will help her to be closer with her mother, " I got in touch with

her feelings," since Hebrew is her mother's native language. At the same time, she believes in her abilities and superiority, by declaring that the language is not difficult and she is the one "at the top of her class." In terms of her cognitive aspects, as defined by Markus and Kitayama, the fact that she tends to describe others in the form of generalizations indicates that she is not an interdependent person: " Hebrew writers are incredibly expressive," or "Israelis are emotional, passionate people," unlike Americans who "could care less." She even generalizes about the members of her immediate group by saying, "Students at Brandeis do not really want to be here." Markus and Kitayama suggest that when persons speak in generalizations, it means that they are not sensitive to and do not respond to details about others, reinforcing the notion that they are independent. Yet, in Tova's case, as in many of the other cases, in terms of emotional aspects, she behaves as an interdependent individual. Tova really respects others, her parents and her teachers. She believes in giving service to others, by teaching Hebrew better, and she is very specific when describing her current job in an afternoon Hebrew school and her concerns regarding the needs of her learners and their parents.

This is also true of Rebecca. Like Tova she believes that learning Hebrew is a result of her belief that the practical solution to achievement is by "following the stuff in your heart" and by looking "inside yourself and figuring out that you have what you most enjoy …you will be more successful in life." Studying Hebrew is totally an inner motivation. "I feel totally alive… Hebrew speaks to me personally… I love it…It uses all my skills and talents." In this way she expresses the independent side of her personality. However, her interdependent qualities are expressed by the fact that she is sensitive to others, and has respect for her teachers, and feels connected to all Jews: " I care a lot

about the Jewish people ...everyone of us all over the world". David is also an independent person with emotions that can be characterized as interdependent. He refuses to take the positions of the others regarding Israel and Judaism. He claims that the Western Wall should not be the most sacred place for Jews, nor should Jerusalem. He is also motivated to study Hebrew to enhance his career as a rabbi. However, on the other hand, he expresses respect for his friends' knowledge, and really works hard to match his knowledge with theirs, in regard to Judaic studies. He also really cares about his family, for whom he feels responsible, and attempts to have them join the Jewish community so they can increase their sense of belonging.

Shelly also exhibits some interdependent characteristics since she feels responsible for taking care of her mother and her siblings and studying Hebrew to be better connected to her parents. She also feels the need to protect her mother and tries to visit her every weekend in Las Vegas to help her take care of her disabled sister. However, she appears to be independent in her decision to pursue her studies in Israel, far from her family, because she feels it will enhance her study of economics. Her study of Hebrew seems to fulfill her interdependent needs, while her major study in economics appears to serve her independent qualities.

Paul's motivations to study Chinese are a clear indication of his independent personality, as is his wish to follow the Taoist philosophy. Therefore, he left his other areas of studies so he could concentrate on this study which, "fits his personality." On the other hand, he seems interdependent in his feelings towards the Chinese people, and he is upset that they are "misunderstood" by foreigners. In specific, he cares about a woman in Chinatown, whom he helps in English, and about his Chinese friends and girlfriend who

introduced him to this culture. He plans to study in Taipei as a form of solidarity with his friends who share their background.

By studying Chinese, Eli also was motivated by independent characteristics. He wanted to study a language that could make him "unique," different from other students, and would at the same time open doors for him to different job possibilities. At the same time, he has special connections, feelings, and interest in the Chinese people, a characteristic typical of interdependent people. He is very emotional when talking about his conversations with different people during his visit to China, especially his Tai Chi teacher, whom he especially adores.

Brice has similar independent elements in his personality. Since he was motivated to study Chinese as part of his journey to find himself, the Taoist philosophy "related to my personal life," and he changed his life to pursue it. On the other hand, in regards to specific people, he feels sorry for his girlfriend, with whom he regrets cutting his relationship in very "immature way …It really broke her down… and I really regret it," and for his parents who do not "get it", especially his "mother from the old school," although he's grateful to them since they have "accepted it"[this way of life].
Lee is clearly showing signs of an independent personality. He came to the conclusion that no religious dogma can explain the truth by explaining God; therefore he believes that the truth is within the "human spirit" and it is individual to each person. At the same time, his interdependent personality is demonstrated in his ability and desire to integrate with different groups on campus and to feel connected to them as well as to show respect for his teachers and for his mother who guided him in his early years.

It is interesting to note that the Asian students who participated in this research also showed signs of independent personality in the areas of cognition and motivation and interdependent personality in the area of emotions. Betty is a Taiwanese who studies Japanese since she finds an interest in the language. In doing so, she disconnects herself from the views of her immediate group, who still see the Japanese as the enemy. She is "angry" at the event, but she can still recognize that the Japanese people she personally knows are the "most wonderful people, whom she cares about; "They are very open minded; they have been exposed to different culture and they are not typical Japanese." Eleanor and Poen, both Koreans, are definitely independent since they wanted to study Japanese for their future careers .Yet, when Eleanor describes that in addition to her career motivation, she really wanted to study the language so she can understand the language her parents speak among themselves, or when she tells how, as an only child, she travels to see them every three months because she misses them tremendously, she shows her interdependent side. When Poen describes his relationship with a friend who convinced him to major in Asian studies he shows the interdependent side of his personality. The above examples suggest that the learners of my research demonstrate duality in their personalities. While the independent side of them is often emphasized, when it comes to human relationships they all show interdependent behavior whether they come from Western or Eastern cultures.

5.2 The Learners' Common Characteristics:

The personalities of the subjects are also characterized by their ability to conduct their lives according to a set of values that they believe in. These values basically aim to help them create an environment in which they will be able to develop themselves. All subjects' main goal is to satisfy their own needs, and in many cases the foreign language is used as a vehicle to fulfill them. In other words, the intentions of the subjects to develop their interior lives is a central motive in all the following values that they posses and pursue and seems foundational in their commitment to advanced level foreign language learning.

5.2.1 Core Values

a. Appreciation for efforts

The first value that seems to be primary to all the subjects is their appreciation of effort. This value is expressed in many ways. The interviewees appreciate efforts that bring results in the context of their personal needs. It seems that during the course of their lives most of the interviewees went through stages that forced them to overcome some obstacles. Efforts can be expressed in their willingness to make sacrifices to achieve a goal. For example, both Jill and Eleanor moved out of their family home and their country to boarding school in United States. They confess that this was a difficult experience. Eleanor says, " It was different, very hard to get used to... It was really hard for me". For Betty, who had the same experience, it was a real trauma: " Some things are very personal like my childhood and coming to the United States. I usually do not talk to

people about it and when I do I will cry." With all of this, the three of them did not give up and made it work for them. In terms of their personal need to achieve, they recognize the result of these efforts; as Betty expressed it, " I was the top 1% of a class of 800. That's wonderful." In college she applied her ability while studying Japanese: "I tried very hard, not just grade wise. But I pushed myself to know more."

Tova views her efforts to achieve academically as the reason for her success: " When I was young, I always got straight A's because I was well-behaved and I studied," and she adds, " I will do almost anything to learn."

The recognition of effort as a necessary value to succeed is well-expressed in Lee's work with Chinese characters. He spent a whole summer studying them five hours a day so he can overcome his difficulties in the language: " I spent that summer …studying Chinese five hours a day at home by myself….I say it [the word] to myself, I pronounce it to myself out loud…[and write it] a hundred times." Eleanor recognizes her success in Japanese as a result of spending "three hours for one word sheet, because I have to look up words in the dictionary." Not putting efforts into her work will make her "hate the language" and stop studying it.

The above examples indicate the view of the learners that effort is a worthwhile virtue that will bring positive results to help the develop themselves.

b. Appreciation for learning and teaching

Learning is a favorite activity for all the interviewees, viewed by them as a virtue that can serve to fulfill their development. There are several ways in which they define good learning and teaching. Tova explained her attitude towards learning; " I went to

preschool for two years and I left after the first year and said to the teacher that I was not going back to school because I did not want to play in the sandbox any more, I wanted to learn." She rejected her placement because her teacher was not tuned in to her particular learning needs. She also struggled with her favorite art teacher who insisted on giving her tests although he knew that Tova would fail since she refused to memorize: "I thought it is ridiculous and I was confused with all the names". The grade "D" that he gave her did not prevent her from appreciating the teacher and the benefit of the learning, and she is still in touch with this teacher in spite of it. While appreciating the learning that was tuned to her needs, she refused to comply with a form of test that did not match her learning style. Good learning is also an ability to engage in a productive negotiation with the teacher. Tova chooses classes in which she is not only receiving ideas and information, but in which she feels she is able to enrich the professor with her ideas.

Lee recognizes that his high school years were really "the definite time for me in terms of my education, like my intellectual shaping." He claims that the teachers' ability to recognize his needs contributed to this since, " We were really forced to actually think."

Betty, who came from Taiwan, is very appreciative of the American educational system in comparison to the Taiwanese. She especially values the fact that there is a lot of room in American high schools, for creativity. Like Tova, she hates to be forced to memorize; she prefers to solve problems or study literature or write where you can express yourself. She realizes how creative she became because of the American educational system. She is also dismayed by the fact that in Taiwan they had to learn for longer hours "until 5 p.m." As a result, "I did not have much of a life," she complains.

She admits that she was always an active member of her class. It seems that other students who came from East Asia feel the same way she feels regarding the American educational system.

Eleanor was happy that in the American system, you are allowed to talk to your teacher, and not just "sit and listen." She also appreciates the extra-curricular activities that she could not enjoy in Korea since they did not emphasize them there.

Poen complained that in Seoul, one teacher taught all the subjects " from gym class to math," while here he enjoys negotiating with variety of teachers and their expertise.

Being good students is also important to all the interviewees, and they are willing to work hard for it. Eli gave up his extra-curricular activities so he could dedicate more time to academic study. Tova is very demanding of herself academically; although she does not believe in grades, she wants to be the top student in her class. She needs to be excellent because she cares about " what the professor thinks about me." Brice, on the other hand, understands how his personal needs can benefits from his being a top student. He was the "kind of student who always got A's in high school." However, he hated most of his classes. He forced himself to succeed since he had "to get the best grades" so he could obtain opportunities in college. Looking back, he admits that although he was the valedictorian in his high school, this learning was "superficial." He emphasizes the fact that now he makes choices differently, studying only subjects that "fit" his life.

Betty was at the top of her class in Taiwan, and also in the upper 1% out of 800 students in her high school in New York. Eleanor currently has a GPA of 3.9. Shelly was also the valedictorian in her school and the pride of her mother.

As college students, the subjects are willing to take upon themselves more responsibilities. Eli is taking at least five courses per semester; Betty is always auditing additional courses, as is David, who wants to take advantage of the offerings and learn as much as possible.

The above examples clearly indicate, in my opinion, that the subjects are convinced that a good learning environment, which includes their efforts, relevant subject matter, creative opportunities, recognition, and a supportive teacher will enhance their inner development.

c. Appreciation for foreign languages.

Knowing languages in general is seen as a value among the interviewees. They all view the target language, as well as other foreign languages they learn, as means to explore their needs and also to help them fulfill themselves. They expressed the view that foreign language opens a door for them to a culture from which they can benefit in terms of their personal needs. These needs include their view of the language as a source of pleasure. For Shelly, speaking Spanish to people, either native speakers or other classmates "who loved Spanish as much as I did," was a "fun thing to do." Tova "was falling in love with the language," and she admits to being very "emotional" in Hebrew. Rebecca also confesses that she "really loves it" [Hebrew]. Billy says that he is "happy" while doing the activities in the Hebrew class, and whenever he manages to listen to the Hebrew Channel on the Internet, the sound of the language gives him "pleasure." Lee declares, "I love Chinese." Eli finds Chinese "exciting." Brian "like[s]" Chinese and sees it as "fun." Learning the Chinese culture and language makes Annie "happy." Poen

always has "liked" the Japanese culture and language. Eleanor knows that Japanese is the course she "enjoys the most". Betty also "loves the language [Japanese]".

In addition, they view the language as an opportunity to enrich themselves. Tova became familiar with the Israeli literature that "speaks to her." For Rebecca, Hebrew is the "window to the Jewish world". For David, Hebrew is a tool to enhance his Judaic studies. Billy can pray and come to understand the Israeli culture, and Shelly gets in touch with her Israeli roots. Lee and Brice believe that Chinese is the window to understanding Asian culture, and a first step to learning other Asian languages. Annie sees her learning as a tool that will help her to enhance her understanding of her own culture and her ability to carry it on and teach it to her children. For Paul, Chinese creates an opportunity to examine an ancient culture that he adores. Eli sees any foreign language as a tool to satisfy his curiosity about other people's lives, and to learn from it. Eleanor, Jill, and Poen feel that learning Japanese brings them closer to a culture which has been familiar to them since their childhood, in addition to the fact that it might give them an opportunity for their future careers.

Their appreciation for the target language has also originated, in my opinion, from the fact that by successfully learning a difficult foreign language, they reinforce their beliefs that they possess great aptitude for learning languages. None of them complain at this stage about the level of difficulties of the target language, nor do they complain about languages they have studied in the past. For Shelly, Spanish was easy. So were Russian and Spanish to David, who cannot remember moments of crisis in his career as a foreign language learner: "Everything was smooth and easy… I picked them up easily." He had studied Spanish since fourth grade and, as an excellent student, he skipped a year and got

the chance to do "fun stuff" such as watch Spanish TV, and he "liked it." Annie believes that "certain people pick up languages easier than others" and she is among them. She believes that her ability for languages originated from the fact that she comes from a bilingual family. Eleanor seems to be convinced that language learning is her strongest point: "I cannot do math, I cannot do science; I can do languages. I can deal with languages."

When describing their learning processes as pleasurable, they reveal their view regarding the simplicity of their language learning, and that such learning does not require complicated operations. For example, for Paul, Chinese is "similar to English because it goes subject - verb- object." In order to remember characters, he uses memorization of the character "components" by imagining them. Annie uses "lists of words" for writing. Eli writes sentences over and over again; since he believes that knowing will be the result of "practice." Lee "pronounces …out loud" and maybe writes "100 times" the Chinese characters. Billy "loves to figure out the root," so he can understand the Hebrew vocabulary, and so does Rebecca who "love[s] to decode things, to analyze them." While for Betty, learning Japanese "just takes a lot of memorization."

From the above description it seems that they have found their own learning methods that give them a sense of power and control over the learning process. Another way to express their appreciation for language is the fact that most of the interviewees are successful and experienced language learners, an experience that they value because it contributes to their self-esteem. Annie studied Spanish for four years in high school, and although she knows she has forgotten a lot, she is confident that she will be able to pick it up when necessary.

Billy, at age 14, as a freshman in high school, started his French class and he "did really well." His success in French led him to start studying German in his sophomore year in high school. Rebecca has studied Spanish since seventh grade, and has not experienced difficulties in it, even when she studied it at the university as part of her undergraduate work. Eli, who comes from a Jewish religious background, declares that he has studied Hebrew "all [his] life" since first grade to his senior year in high school. He believes, " I was always very good in Hebrew." He even spent a semester in Israel living with an Israeli family, and attended a regular Israeli high school in which he had to study all the subjects in Hebrew. In addition, he studied French and was sent by his parents to spend a summer with a French family. Lee knew several languages as a child in Jamaica. He spoke Spanish with his neighbors, learned French in school, and spoke English with his mother. Annie was a successful learner of Spanish in New York City in where she could practice with native speakers. Jill, who lives in Japan, speaks English and French, a language she "really wants to know" and she feels it makes her unique. Betty speaks Taiwanese and Mandarin Chinese at home, and studied English successfully when she came to America as a teenager. She also studied Spanish for a year in high school and "loved it."

As we can see, the appreciation of language in general among the subjects, in my opinion, originated from the fact that the languages themselves, as well as or the processes of learning them, gave the subjects opportunities to benefit from them, either as a source for self-enhancement, pleasure, or to give themselves an opportunity to reinforce their beliefs about their success.

d. Appreciation for Human Connection

The data suggests that the subjects in my research seem to believe that the ability to communicate is a virtue, mainly because they can develop themselves and their innate language ability through this act.

Paul believes that only by communicating with others in their native language does his language ability have an opportunity to develop: "I have learned all of my conversation from talking outside the classroom." This ability will enable him to go to China, to speak the language, and "to experience the real culture." Brice says, "the most important part is conversation" mainly with "people from different cultures." Besides the fact that it makes him feel good, it allows him to meet people who create the "culture I fell in love with [Chinese]." This desire for human connection was what attracted him to join a theater group; the idea that through acting he could connect himself to another personality made him feel that this was another way to "understand what it is to be a human." Eli clearly admires the Chinese people, and is happy to be able to communicate with them in order to learn from them how they "deal with life," a knowledge that can enrich his own experience. Annie uses the Chinese language to communicate better with her own family and her community and become closer to them. Lee also admits that studying, especially Chinese, has helped him connect with a life that he always admired and felt he belonged to. This sense of belonging is so strong that in order to express it he says, " If there is such thing as re- incarnation, I was Chinese in my other life."

For Poen and Eleanor, their communications with others in Japan is very important. As Eleanor says, "I will have to deal with the Japanese people, so I want to speak their language; I want to communicate." Betty believes that going to Japan with the

ability to communicate will make her a "more open person." For her, the idea of speaking Japanese was her goal; by speaking it, she is "fulfilling her wish" to connect with others in Japan.

For Rebecca, communicating in Hebrew with Israelis helps her to really get to know the people she respects: " I actually started to speak Hebrew with them, I could understand more." Shelly got in touch with her roots, her Israeli parents, and her family in Israel through communicating in Hebrew. For Billy, the ability to communicate in Hebrew is an indication of his ability to survive in a country where he can communicate in the native language. His ability to survive will empower him and will give him "confidence" in his abilities to connect with others.

The idea of using communication as a tool for self-enhancement does not contradict my claim that the interviewees demonstrated interdependent qualities. They sincerely cared about others including their friends, family members, and the people who represent the target language they are learning. Their understanding that the ability to communicate can benefit their inner selves can coexist along with their interdependent qualities. This duality can exist because of their concern about others, but it also demonstrates that language learning and communication can enrich self-image and personal needs.

5.2.2. Self awareness

The centrality of the self that was expressed by the subjects and is reinforced by another of their characteristics, which is their ability to be fully aware of themselves, as learners of languages and as persons. When asked about their ability in the language

they all gave a detailed evaluation. Betty estimated that "80% of the time I can read …without translation." Annie can "understand 85%…speak about 80-85%…read 60% and write 50%." Jill says she knows Japanese "85%."

Lee believes that in terms of reading he is advanced and "in my speaking I am not as good as my reading." Paul believes that his main strength in Chinese is his speaking ability. Tova says that her level in Hebrew "may be advanced, but there is room to become superior." Billy recognizes that "he is doing well in Hebrew," and Shelly recognizes her advanced level. For David the reading is "easier to pick up" compared to writing. The fact that these evaluations are accurate according to their instructors attests to the reality of their self-awareness.

They are also are very aware of their identity. Betty feels Taiwanese in America, and American in Taiwan. Annie clearly sees herself as "Asian American." Although she was born in Asia, she "grew up here." Jill confesses that "there are parts in me that I think are part Japanese, but the way I act, I am open to people and more giving; that is more American." Brice is "culturally Jewish and religiously disjoined." Lee, who has been Jamaican, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Hari Krishna, thinks that he is really agnostic "because I believe in the probability of the existence of God." He does not like definition and admits that he is lacking the essence of belonging. Although he lives in the United States "there are deep issues that prevent me from feeling comfortable as a citizen." Paul is an American Taoist.

It is interesting to note that the students, who are Hebrew learners all define themselves as American Jews, even those who by nationality are Israelis, such as Tova and Shelly. They all have variations of Jewishness; Billy, a former Italian Christian who

converted, identifies himself as a conservative Jew, whose "homeland" is Israel. David is a "secular Jew" and Tova, who feels "incredibly Jewish," defines this in terms of her academic knowledge of Hebrew and Judaic studies. Shelly says that she is culturally Jewish, but not religiously.

5.2.3 The Learners' Past and Present Environments

When all the subjects talk about their past and present experience, they describe several factors that according to them paved them the way to become learners of the target language at an advanced level. One of the most apparent factors is a supportive environment when growing up. This environment included family members, friends, and educators who either introduced them to qualities that helped them develop and use their language ability, or to the actual culture, or by being permissive in letting the subjects follow their own way, even when it was clearly opposed to their environmental expectations. This provided a rich framework for their personal growth and their language learning.

Paul's friends first introduced him to Chinese. " At my high school I had Chinese friends and it kind of got me interested in learning." In addition to this exposure, his girlfriend, a Taiwanese, introduced him to Chinese food and Taoism, which he felt fit his life. When he decided to pursue his academic career in Asian studies instead of becoming a scientist, his parents did not object. He appreciates the fact that "they are fine with that. I pretty much have autonomy, so really it does not matter, which is good."

Brice went through a similar process. He discovered the Chinese culture, and its value to him through his Asian American girlfriend. She introduced him to Chinese

family values as well as to a culture that was more secular and understandable to him than his American Jewish culture. His parents did not like his new tendencies, but they never stopped him; on the contrary they now just "dig it." They reacted in the same way when he decided to abandon their dream that he become a physician, and instead to pursue his East Asian studies. Although they did not like it, "my parents let me do everything; they are doubtful about a lot of stuff that I do, but they do not stop me from doing it." In addition, he always encountered teachers who were supportive, at his summer school in Berkley, as well as his Chinese teacher at Brandeis "who is like a friend" to him. He also finds that his friends at the Asian American association at Brandeis "love" him and fully "accept" him.

Lee was introduced to the Chinese culture as a child when his mother made him "read those child almanacs and…National Geographic." She also introduced him to other cultures by encouraging him to study French and Spanish in elementary school. Since his family and his background are multicultural, then it also served as nurturing his development of an openness to other cultures [his father is black Christian and Jamaican, and his mother is white, Jewish, and English]. His mother's tendencies to support him in following his own way were by letting him move from one religion to another, in order to find the "right" religion, and even conversion with him to Christianity. In addition, he always enjoyed the support of his teachers in high school as well as of those at Brandeis. His high school teachers "forced him to think". At Brandeis his Chinese teacher, who saw the potential in him, did not want him to "quit," and she encouraged him to stay in the course and succeed.

Eli grew up in a family in which foreign language was always appreciated. Besides Hebrew, his parents know other languages, and encouraged him to learn them also. They gave him the opportunity to stay in an immersion program in France so that his French would get better, and many times paid for his stays in different immersion programs in Israel. For two summers, he went to China, to be immersed in Chinese. Actually, his first exposure to the Chinese language was through his father's friend who went to China and convinced him and his father to take a crash course in Chinese together, while Eli was still in high school.

Annie seems to have parents who tend to support her in any kind of situation. They are Chinese, and are happy to see her studying the language, but never forced her to do so. They also strongly advised her in terms of her academic career, since " I was jumping all over the place." Therefore, "they helped me a lot to decide, not really to choose for me. But they were supportive of whatever I chose."

Although Betty and her sister were sent by their family to the United States so that they could get good education, Betty views it as a sign of her family's support to enhance her life. In addition, in New York, one of her teachers helped her with her academic learning as well as she giving her emotional support. "I went over to her house, she corrected my English, helped me with my papers". During her first year in college "which was horrible, she [the teacher] called me every single day." Betty has a history of support from teachers; she still remembers her third grade teacher in Taiwan who " recognized that I had talent and it made such a difference in my life."

Poen admits that thanks to his mother he can read books. "She gave me presents if I read." In addition, he recognizes the support that his Japanese teacher gave him, since

she understood his style of learning and "she pushes you to the limit" and it works with him since he can not study "unless someone makes me."

Tova was first introduced to the language by her mother, since it is her mother's native tongue. Her mother supported her all the way, from agreeing with her that grades are not important, to choosing her own career, and supporting it financially. In addition, Tova enjoys the unconditional support of her Israeli grandparents that "no matter what, they love me."

Shelly acquired her exposure to Hebrew through her Israeli family, and her mother's willingness to communicate with her in Hebrew which reinforced her motivation to learn. Rebecca got the blessing of her parents when she decided to get out of her mainstream career as a computer specialist, and become a Judaic Studies major.

Billy's conversion to Judaism was never objected to by his parents; on the contrary, " I guess they are Catholic, but they are not religious ...I do not think they had a strong reaction either way, because they were not upset with my decision ...they thought as long as I believed in something, they were happy. I found something I wanted to follow through and they were very willing to take me to temple to study." David got support from the Jewish community that he found and makes him feel that he belongs. His secular parents did not only not object to his religious affiliation, but supported him by actually joining the religious community.

Summary of the Data Analysis

The analysis of the data from this study served to confirm a pattern of development for students who have attained an advanced level in learning Hebrew, Japanese, and Chinese, at Brandeis University. This pattern has these common characteristics:

- In terms of their developmental growth, the subjects in this study have a high level of development, as it was examined through theoretical frameworks of the "Seven Vectors Theory" and the "Ego Developmental Theory (see above pp. 239-240)
- In terms of their cognitive development, these learners are at the higher levels, as described in the following theories: Perry's theory of the cognitive and ethical growth of college learners (see above pp.240-241), Magolda's theory regarding students' epistemologies and their academic experience (see above pp.242-243), and Fowler's theory regarding college learners and their moral stages and development of faith (see above pp.243-244).
- Furthermore, other aspects of development that have influenced the subjects' capacity to become advanced language learners, are their personality traits. While Markus and Kitayama claim that Western students are more independent, while Asian students are interdependent, the data in this study suggest that all the subjects, regardless their ethnic origins demonstrate independent personality in the areas of cognition and motivation, while in terms of their emotions they tend to be more interdependent (see above p. 246).

- Additionally, the interviewees share core values that guide their personal and academic lives. These values include the learners' appreciation for effort, for learning and teaching, for languages in general; and their admiration for human connections. When examining these values, a common thread among them is the fact that they have been used by the subjects to enhance their personal needs. In addition, they seem to be aware of their academic abilities (see above pp. 292-303).

- The other common aspect among these learners is the fact that they all have experienced supportive environments in their past and in their present that allow them to nurture and develop their interest in the target language and culture (see above pp. 304-307).

Chapter 6

6. Implications

The outcome of this research clearly suggests that the group of learners who choose to continue their foreign language learning at the advanced level, is a unique group whose members posses common characteristics. The data presented above show these learners to be cognitively well developed, with a self-centered definition of interest. Their main goal is to enhance themselves, and learning the target language at the advanced level is used as an important and central medium to achieve this goal. Such an attitude to language learning may offer some implications for practitioners, administrators and researchers in the field of foreign language learning and teaching.

6.1 Implications for Practitioners

The main questions that practitioners and administrators in the field of foreign language learning and teaching should ask themselves as a result of this insight is whether the role of the language program is to satisfy the needs of this selected group of learners with a unique characteristics, or whether they can learn from these learners' experience approaches that can help encourage more learners to continue language learning at the advanced level, as a potential framework to enhance themselves.

What is actually learned from this research is the importance of the centrality of learners in designing language program goals and curricula. Foreign language programs aim to teach learners a new language. However, as we can learn from this research, some learners perceive language learning as a medium that supports the psychological, emotional, and spiritual processes that they go through at this specific period of their lives.

The notion that the language learning process viewed by learners at the advanced level as a framework that can foster their growth and development, can shed a new light on the possible roles that language programs may have for learners. As a result, language teachers and administrators should understand that, although their goal is to enhance the learning of a new language, there is a need to remember that an important focus on the learners and their needs. In other words, teachers should remember that their role is to teach **learners a language** and not **language to learners**.

There are several recommendations regarding the operative steps that need to be adopted in order to address this perspective:

- There is a need create a learning environment which would give learners the room for personal growth and development; therefore, language should be taught in a framework of a cohesive **program**. By program I mean a framework which, on one hand, has a clear setting, but at the same time can be flexible so it can fulfill all learners' needs. The value of such a program may be determined by its versatility, its ability to offer a variety of courses taught by a variety of teachers. The variety of the offerings should allow learners to navigate themselves through the path that will help them most to enhance both their language skills and their personal needs. This variety should include both skill courses and content-based courses. Some learners will prefer to enhance their language acquisition by strengthening either speaking, reading, or writing and others would chose to learn through courses that center on different disciplines such as literature, history, art, etc. This model offers different paths in its curriculum, allowing learners to consider their interests and their personal goals as important considerations for choosing how to proceed in their learning. Such a curriculum requires the employment of a new model of a language teacher who is expert in both areas, teaching language skills as well as specializing in a one or more disciplines that are related to the target language.
- Another benefit of teaching language in the framework of such a program is that it enables teachers and administrators to create a support system for their learners, by working as a team to monitor the learners' progress, and their changing needs. The teachers and the administrators can serve as the learners'

advising body from their first day in the program by developing devices that will help identify the main needs and contexts of each learner. These devices could include questionnaires, interviews, and group discussions in which learners share their histories and goals. Such devices will create relationships between learners and teachers in which teachers will also serve as mentors to the learners. As a result, in such an ideal language program, teachers and administrators not only assume the responsibility of language experts, but also of language educators, since mentoring the learners means moving along with them through the paths of learning by constantly negotiating with them on the best ways to achieve and clarify their goals.

- Emphasizing the learners' needs throughout the language learning process requires teachers and administrators to adopt a more holistic approach. While monitoring the learners, teachers examine both their language ability and other personal elements, such as backgrounds, needs, goals, and abilities. They must be willing to demonstrate flexibility and be skilled enough to adapt teaching style, materials, and methods to fulfill the different needs, even the "souls" of the learners. Focusing on individual needs does not mean moving to individualistic instructions. It only means creating a supportive and dynamic environment for learning grounded in teachers' rethinking and expanding their role.
- Such an approach requires support for teachers, helping them broaden their knowledge in other disciplines, supporting them in gaining mentoring/counseling skills, allowing them to broaden their practice without

fear of failure, and rewarding them for experimentation as well as success in the new model. In such a program, the director must serve as a guide and facilitator for growth for the faculty. Faculty development must be a critical component.

- One of the main obstacles to creating such frameworks, especially at the university level, is the fact that universities do not generally view the goals of language learning as tools to answer learners' needs, but rather as a tool to educate them about other cultures or to prepare them for a specific academic discipline. Therefore, there is a need to educate institutional administrators about the variety of roles of advanced language teachers and to understand language teaching differences at a conceptual level. There is also a need to educate the learners about the personal enrichment opportunities that the language program is offering, so they can consider it as a framework for their personal growth and development.
- As I mentioned earlier, there are common personality components that describe the characteristics of the subjects in this research. One of them is the subjects' common core values and beliefs. These core values include appreciating effort; appreciating learning and teaching; appreciating the value of learning in general, and its relation to the value of human connection. It raises the issue of whether the practitioner should aim to cultivate these personality qualities in other learners so they can fit the profile of learners at the advanced level. I believe that this set of values should be emphasized in any curriculum from an early age, as values that serve humans in general. In

addition, educating learners to become self-aware is also a valuable endeavor, in regard to their ability to learn in general as well as language learning in particular. I believe that in language learning, such awareness will make them better learners, since their expectations will be more realistic, and they will be more easily able to identify their goals and successes in the language area. This speaks to the importance of diversity in groups of learners and to the inclusion of multicultural perspectives in all teaching.

- These students were also supported by teachers and parents who encouraged them in their difficult academic moments and freed them to make decisions on their own, according to their understanding. Such elements of supportive environment can be replicated by educators, as well as family members. By creating a supportive environment to nurture learners' explorations to engage their interest, commitments, and values regarding other cultures and languages, we encourage more learners to view language programs as places for personal growth and development. We can do this through respecting learners' choices and providing options for them.
- In addition, what we learn from these subjects is that they grew up in a supportive environment that helped them to view language learning as an optional framework for pursuing their personal needs. From their early education days, they were exposed to different cultures, through different media, either by becoming familiar with other cultures or by growing up in environments where different languages were spoken.

6.2. Implication for Researchers

If, indeed, my assumption that understanding learners' characteristics may give practitioners direction in how to improve their planning regarding teaching and administering foreign language programs, there is a need to expand this research in various directions

- This study was heavily contextualized. It was conducted in a small liberal arts university, on the East Coast, with urban influence, and with its particular type of learners. In order to validate the results of my research, that the characteristics of the learners at the advanced level are related to their personalities and do not depend on their current learning framework, additional study should be undertaken in different contexts in higher education Such research should include institutions that are varied in their size, location, and population profile.
- This study concentrated on learners of languages that are considered to be difficult, as well as less commonly taught, in the United States. In fact, the problem of dropout at the advanced level is even more apparent in the easier and more commonly taught languages. As I mentioned in the introduction to this study, the only two studies that I found on the characteristics of advanced learners were conducted among learners of Spanish, German, and French. They concentrated on the target learning background as the key to understanding the dropout phenomenon. Graman (1987) and Dupuy (1994) conclude that learners reach the advanced level course as a result of learning the target language, for at least a period of time, in informal settings (mainly

in the country in which the target language is in use). The conclusion of my study is different. As I explained earlier, (see above pp.247-313), I conclude that the subjects' common characteristics, which include their developmental stages, their personality traits, and their environments, are key for understanding their willingness to become advanced learners. Therefore, I see the need to re-examine the dropout issue in more commonly taught languages from the points of view I suggested in my study. Such an approach will expand our understanding regarding this phenomenon.

- From its inception, this study aimed to get to know the advanced level learners' views on their language learning processes and to contextualize those views in relation to their personal lives in order to develop a common profile. However, this study, by applying psychological theories related to growth, adult development, personality traits, and learning theories, also suggests some directions in which specifically psychological approaches might be used. Therefore, I believe that there is an opportunity for research in psychology to expand on this approach by applying their methodology in order to study these issues.

6.3. General Implications for the field

As I mentioned earlier (see above pp.92-104) the general research on learners in advanced foreign language courses, has concentrated on two areas. The first focuses on aspects of language acquisition of advanced level learners, including their language production and ways they process and develop the target language.

The other area looked into the dropout phenomenon. The main studies in this area are Graman's (1987) and Dupuy 's (1994) in which they both reached a similar conclusion regarding the dropout phenomenon at the college level among learners of Spanish, French, and German. Both Graman (1987and Dupuy (1994). Both researchers stress the importance of learning in natural environments in continuing study at advanced levels. As a recommendation, Dupuy suggests expanding the natural input in lower level classes in order to give learners a chance to become better target language users and, as a result, to reach the advanced level.

In light of the above, I believe that this current study suggests another perspective from which the dropout phenomenon and advanced foreign language learners may be examined. While Graman and Dupuy concentrate on the linguistic background of the learners as a key to understanding the phenomenon, this research focuses on different areas. These include learners' views of language learning as a framework which will help them to fulfill their personal needs, as well as examination of their other inner qualities, such as their characteristics, personalities, and their developmental levels. Such an approach, tying the dropout phenomenon with the inner processes and components that characterize advanced learners during their years in college, represents a new direction for understanding the phenomenon. Hence, the contribution of this research to the profession is that it offers researchers and practitioners a rationale for examining their students' conceptual views of their world and their interpretations of how the role of foreign language learning enhances them personally as a key for understanding. This is a different approach from those that have been suggested in prior studies. I hope that this research initiates a new direction for focusing learners on foreign language courses, and

developing methods and materials that will offer students a framework for developing their personal characteristics and approaches to life.

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APPENDIX

- Figures 1-10
- Questionnaire
- Approval from The Brandeis Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects
- A Release Form

FIGURE 1

ADVANCED LEVEL LANGUAGE GROUPS

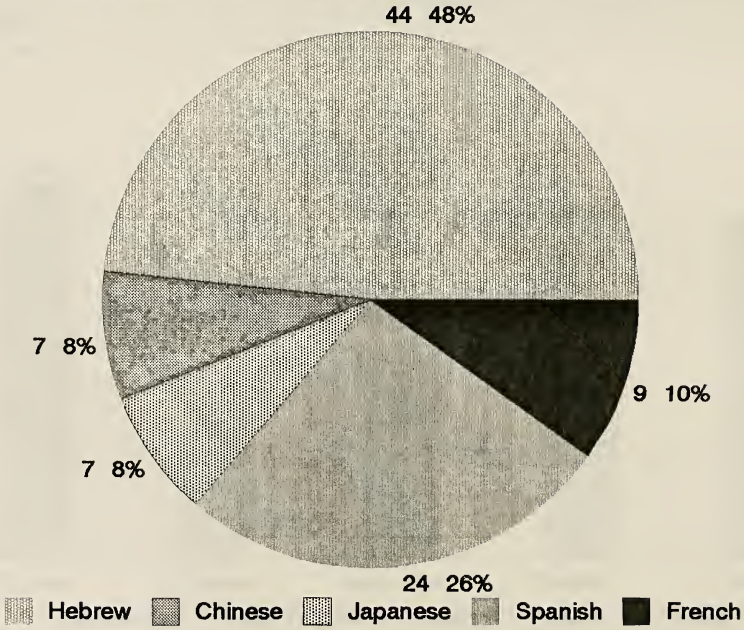


FIGURE 2
ENGLISH NATIVE SPEAKERS IN EACH GROUP

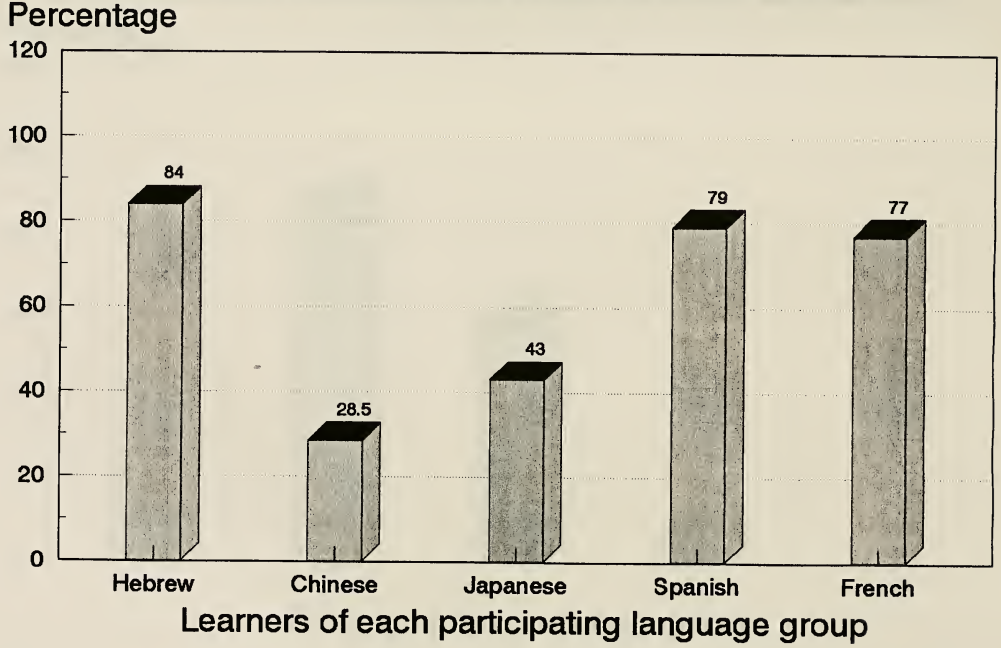


FIGURE 3

PARTCIPANTS WHO STUDY THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGE

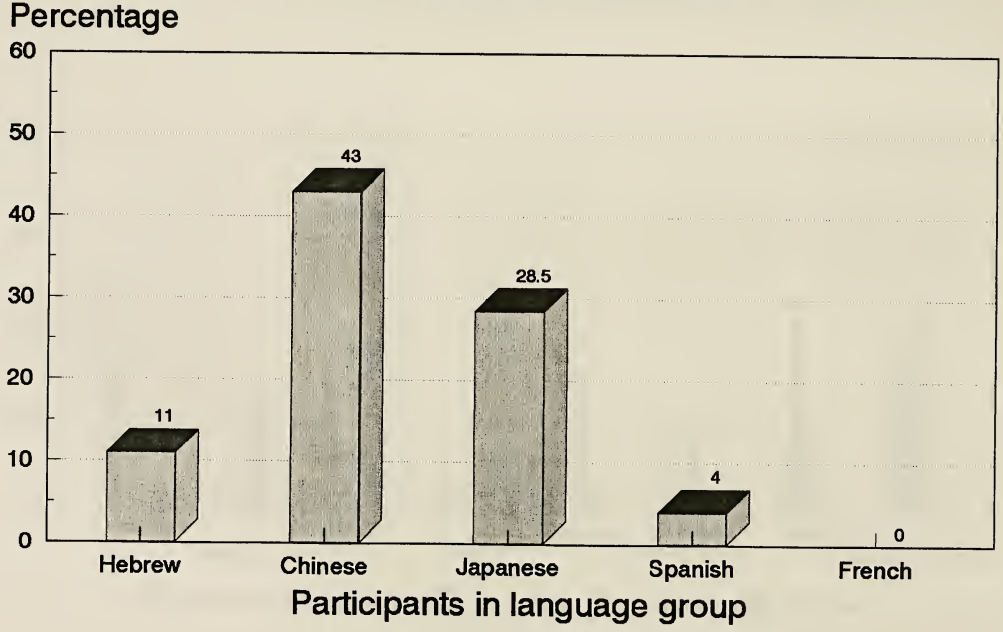


FIGURE 4

BACKGROUND IN STUDYING THE TARGET LANGUAGE

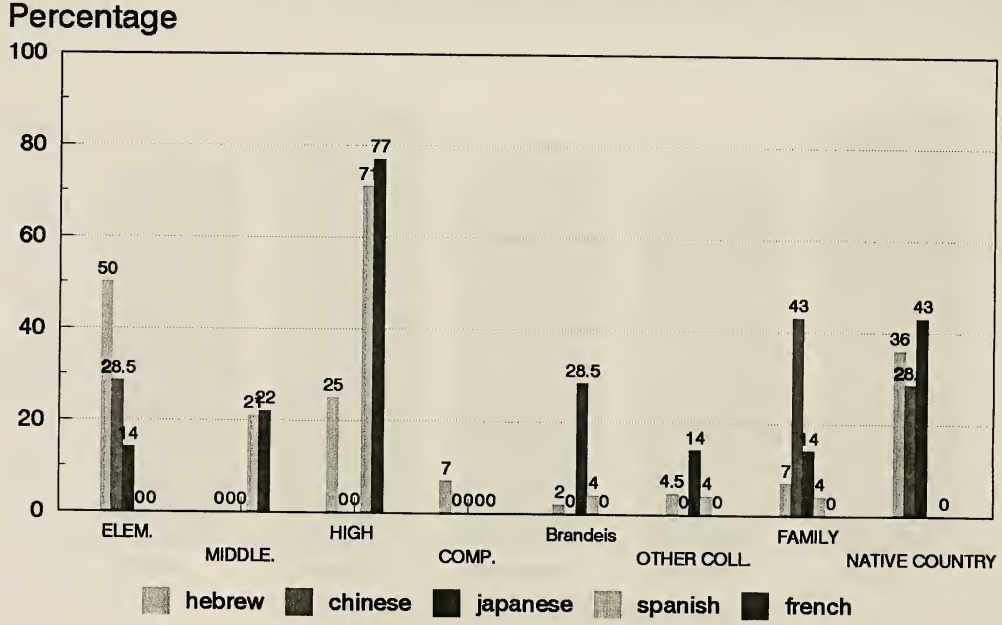


FIGURE 5

EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER LANGUAGES

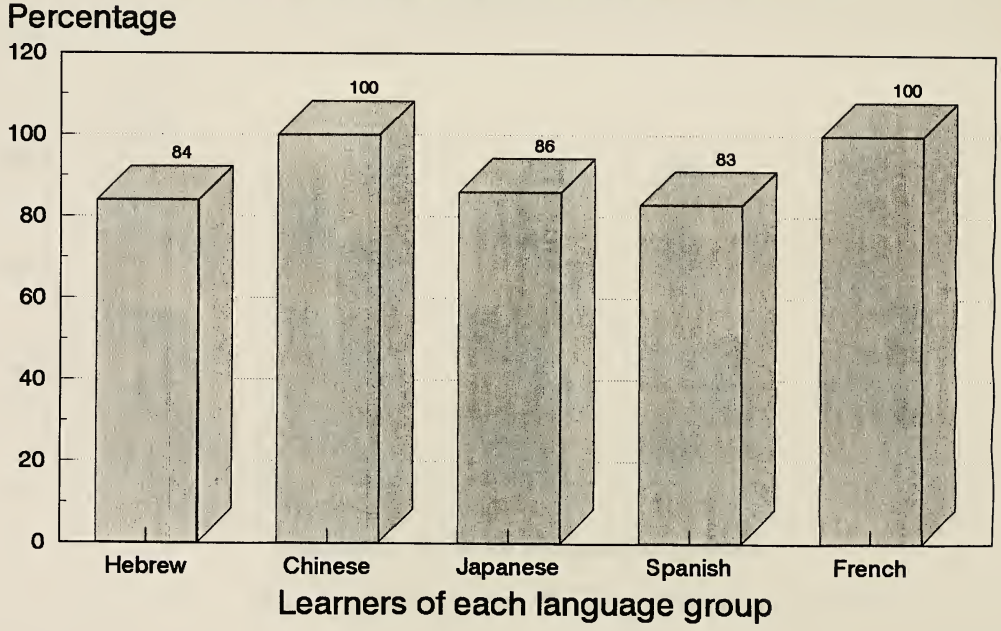


FIGURE 6

NUMBER OF OTHER LANGUAGES STUDIED

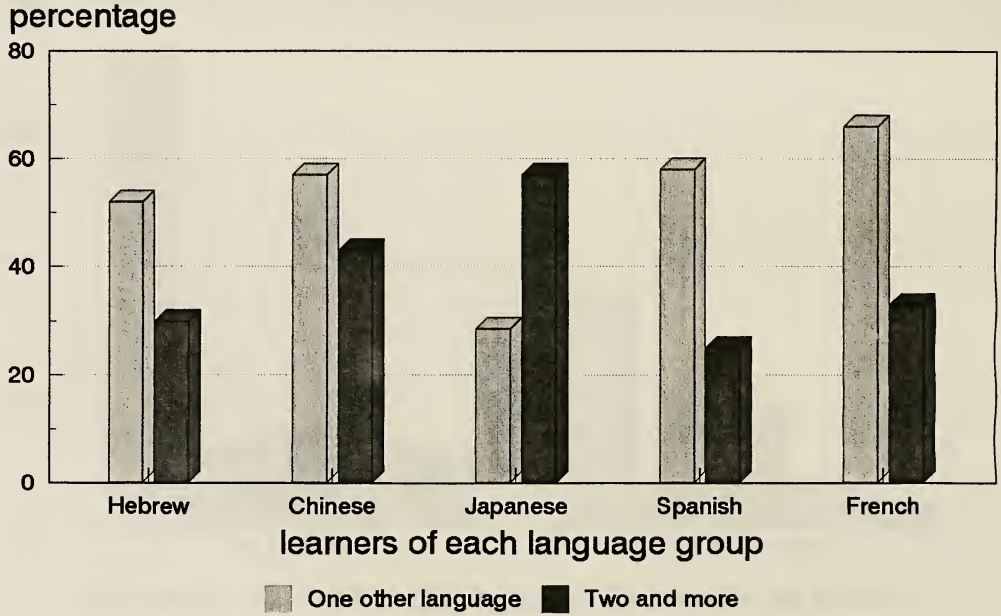


FIGURE 7

VISIT TO COUNTRY WHERE TARGET LANGUAGE IS USED

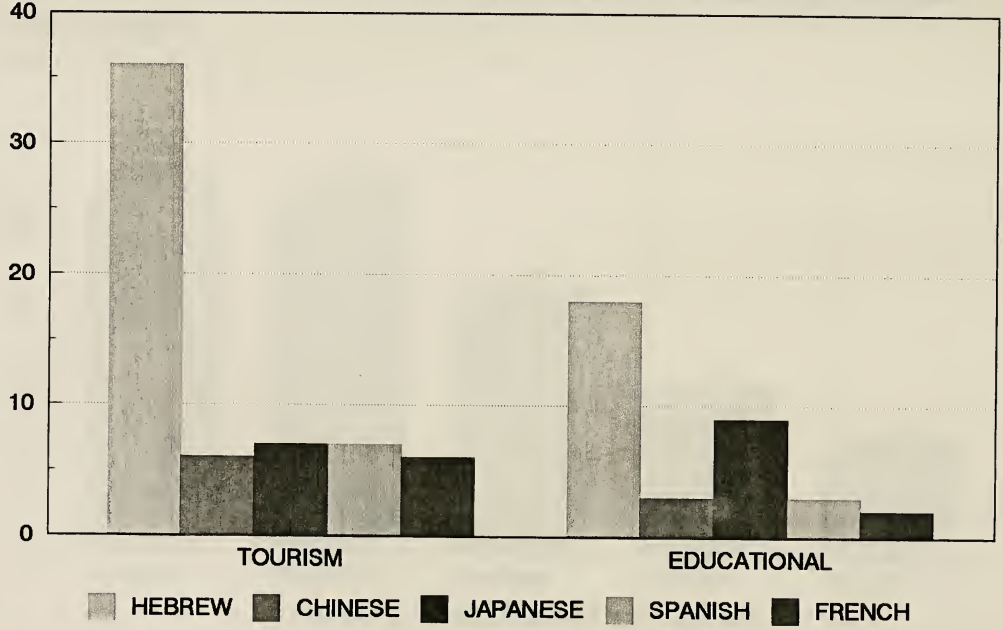


FIGURE 8

PARTICIPANTS LEARNING LANGUAGE TOWARDS MAJOR

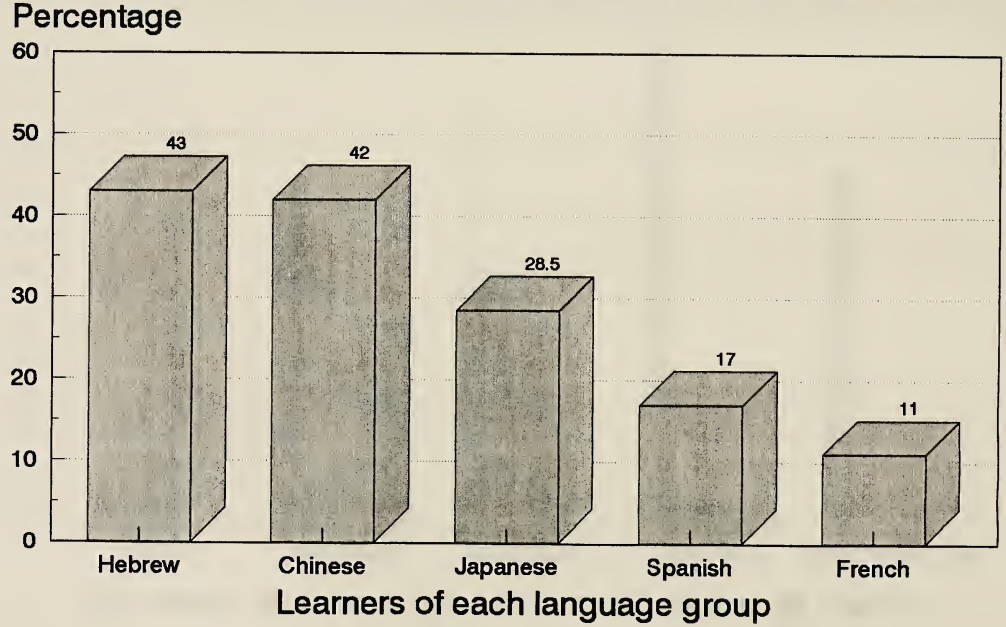


FIGURE 9

REASONS FOR STUDYING AT AN ADVANCED LEVEL

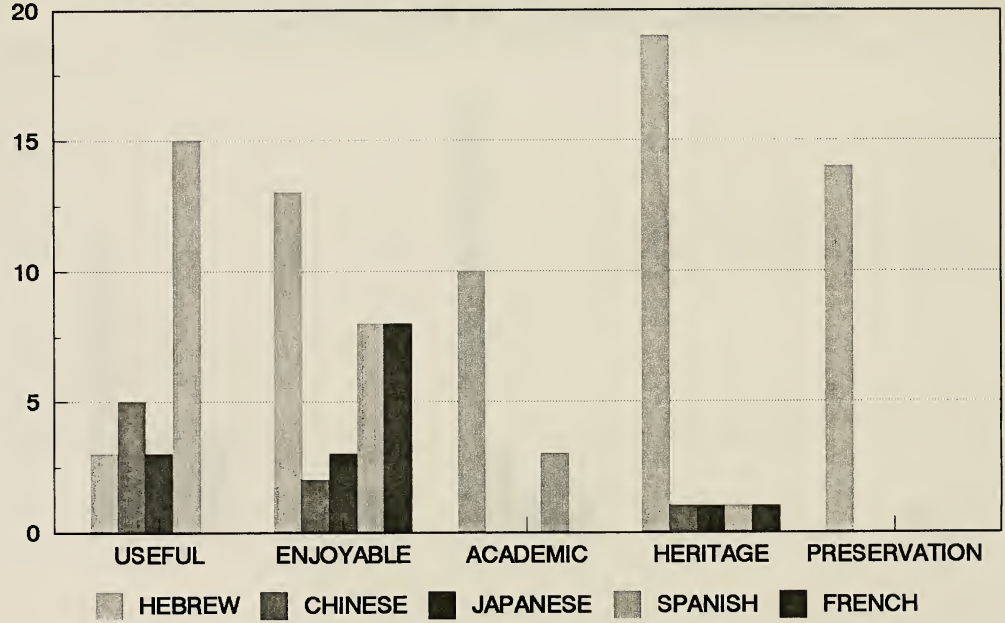
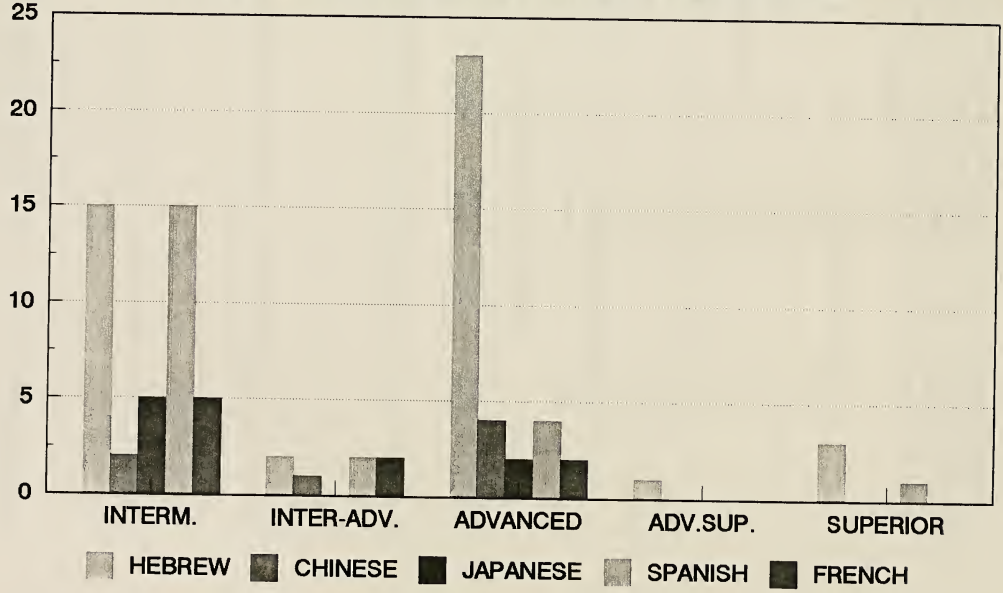


FIGURE 10

PARTICIPANT'S PERCEPTION REGARDING THEIR LEVEL OF COMPETENCE IN TARGET LANGUAGE



Dear Student,
I am currently engaged in research on foreign language learning from the learner's perspective. I appreciate your help in completing this questionnaire. If you are interested in the results or in participating further in this research, please call me at 736 2979. Thank you, Vardit Ringvald

Name _____Course title and #_____

Your major_____

Your native language (s)_____

Your reasons for studying this particular language_____
_____
_____

What do you think your level is: intermediate, advanced, or superior?_____

How have you studied this language previously?
_____
_____
_____

In addition to this particular language, what are your experiences in learning other languages than your native one? _____
_____
_____
_____

Have you ever traveled outside the U.S.? For how long and for what purpose?_____
_____
_____

What are your other interests outside college work?_____
_____
_____
_____

Please sign here. It gives me permission to use your response in any form of publication of this survey _____

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
Waltham, MA 02254

OFFICE OF GRANT, CONTRACT AND PATENT ADMINISTRATION

Memorandum

April 30, 1998

TO: Vardit Ringvald
NEJS/Hebrew

FR: Joel M. Cohen, Assistant Provost for Research

RE: Human Subjects Review

The Brandeis Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed and approved the statement on your proposed research entitled:

Learners of Foreign Language in Advanced Courses in Higher Education

This approval is effective for one year from the date of this notification, at which time you must submit an Annual Certification form to this office, if the project is to continue. Records of this action, as well as Annual Certification forms, are available in this office.

Please contact me if certification to an outside agency is required.

JMC:lc

cc: Ellen Hosbjor
HEX 98 04 052

Committee Notes: (Although this memo authorizes you to proceed with your project, please respond to any comments or questions that appear below.)

Release Form

Dear Participant:

I am currently investigating what motivates a student who takes a foreign language to continue this/her study of a foreign language to an advanced level.
In this study I am interviewing a number of students. The interview is face-to-face question and answer, and it lasts an hour to an hour an a half.

I will be using the recorded interviews for research purposes only and would appreciate your help.

Please sign this form so that I may be able to use your interview. The information will be kept confidential.

Thank you for your participation

NAME: SIGNATURE

SHOULD I NEED TO GET A HOLD OF YOU DURING THE SUMMER, PLEASE INDICATE YOUR PHONE NUMBER: _____ _____ _____

0 1139 0231589 5
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